

The Greatest Things in Religion



EUGENE M. ANTRIM



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The Greatest Things in Religion

Being Studies in Some of the Christian Fundamentals
With Sidelights on the "New Theologies"

By

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Ms. A. 1. 7. 10.

To
WINIFRED VAUGHN

My Wife

INSPIRING COUNSELOR, WISE CRITIC, LOVER,
BRAVE SHARER IN ALL THE TOILS
OF MY MINISTRY

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Foreword

THINGS theological are nowadays *in flux*. Dog-eared traditions and worm-eaten creeds are being consigned to the fire. Christianity is on trial, and its fundamental tenets are being challenged anew, while some imagine they can improve upon them. Our age is asking, with keen and critical insistence, "What think ye of Christ?" The question can not be carelessly parried. The Church must satisfactorily clear up its own thinking on the Person of Christ before it can go on. Once more the storms of debate beat around His head. Our purpose, in this series of studies, is to discover the truth. We have no call to defend a doctrine simply because it is old and considered orthodox, nor to challenge that which is new and deemed heretical. We would first discover the truth, let it lead us where it will; and this we would do "with malice toward none and charity for all." For, as Bishop Whately once epigrammatically declared, "Unless a man begins

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by preaching what he believes he will end by believing what he preaches.”

Doctrine is not true because it is old, nor new either. The “modern mind” (a term sometimes illogically applied to themselves by a few thinkers who are forever taking a shy at some doctrine hoary with age or at some man of straw set up to burn and destroy), may be right or wrong; the “ancient mind” likewise. Newness does not prove worth, nor antiquity either. The former may carry a great deal of paint and veneer, the latter may not endure the fires of reason or the test of service. There are some light-hearted and light-headed people who, on the one hand, swallow a doctrine whole, if only it has been shouted with sufficient vociferation, and there are others, equally uncritical, who, the moment they espy a creed, any creed, proceed to give it a lusty kick. Each is a stupid performance: the first does his religious thinking chiefly with his mouth, the second with his feet. Christ is the court of last resort and the seat of objective authority in the spiritual realm. This authority is derived, ultimately, from God Himself, the final authority. Each mind is, in a limited sense, a law unto itself. By the inherent process of his reason, a man must bring all doctrines into the alembic of his own mind. But the standard of objective

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truth, set up by Christ in His revelation of the final religion, is, after all, the fan that tests and threshes, separates, and sifts out the wheat from the chaff.

When these sermons were first given in Trinity Church, Springfield, Mass., many letters of commendation, and some of criticism, together with the request that they be put into print, were received by the writer. None of those received was more gratifying than the following letter from his old-time teacher and admired friend, the lamented Dr. Borden P. Bowne, one of the last letters he wrote, voicing anew that deep and abiding faith which always characterized him, but was an especially impressive note in his last public discourses. Of course, we do not hold Dr. Bowne responsible for anything here set down. The letter quoted refers to a newspaper clipping, containing an abstract of the first study, "Is He Jesus or Christ?"

BOSTON UNIVERSITY, }
GRADUATE DEPARTMENT, }
BOSTON, MASS., FEB. 11, 1910. }

MY DEAR MR. ANTRIM: I am a good deal pleased with the clipping which you sent me, giving an account of your sermon. I agree with it altogether. It is a great mistake to fancy that our orthodox faith, with regard to Christ, is any worse

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off now than it has been in the past. Any one acquainted with the literature of the middle of the last century would readily admit that that was a time of much greater stress than we are having at present. Indeed, the fancy that things are worse than ever now impresses me as a mark of belated intelligence. It reminds me of the Irishman who assaulted a Jew and when asked what he was doing that for, replied that the Jew had killed his Savior; and when he was told that that happened two thousand years ago, he said, "It is no matter—I only heard of it last night."

I am sorry to find some men, whom I know very well, seeming to incline in that direction. I can only look upon it as a result of dwelling too long in the naturalistic camp. In any case, it is only a local and provincial thing, and one can say of it what Athanasius said of a heretical movement of his time, "It is a little cloud and will pass over."

Cordially yours,

BORDEN P. BOWNE.

But a few weeks passed when Dr. Bowne was translated and this letter was rendered thereby doubly precious and reassuring.

EUGENE MARION ANTRIM.

Springfield, Mass., June, 1910.

Is He Jesus or Christ?

"Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? . . . But whom say ye that I am? . . . Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."—*Matt 16: 13, 15, 16.*

"I am amazed at Christ's purity and holiness and at His infinite beauty. The forms of religion may change, but Christ will grow more and more in the roll of the ages. His character is more wonderful than the greatest miracle."—*Browning.*

"We have come to see that if we will not listen to Jesus Christ in His revelation of the Father, it is not worth while to listen to anybody else. He is the only one who has brought a Gospel worth hearing, and, we may be sure, the only one who has brought the Gospel that can move the hearts of men."—*Borden P. Bowne.*

"Jesus could not mean so much to the heart, if He were not at the same time a problem to the intellect."—*Fairbairn.*

"Jesus baffles only to allure and allures only to enrich."—*L. M. Sweet.*

"Therefore to Thee it was given
Many to save with Thyself.
And at the end of the day,
O Faithful Shepherd! to come,
Bringing Thy sheep in Thy hand,"

—*Arnold.*

I.

IS HE JESUS OR CHRIST?

THE antithesis, Jesus or Christ, originally proposed by Strauss, is just now being revived in some quarters. Those doing so affirm that there is a radical difference between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history, commonly adding a denial of the deity of our Lord. They declare that the New Testament writings are largely fictions and inventions of hero-worshiping imagination. The miracles and much besides are ruled out by a wave of the hand. That they are really myths, underlies this typical assumption. "It is vain to make them conceivable, as natural events, and quite as impossible to imagine things so unnatural to have really happened, and all narratives of this kind must be considered fictions," says one objector. Nearly fifty years ago Strauss modestly revealed to the world his great discovery that the picture of Jesus as Christ in the Gospels was subjectively wrought by "the instrumentality of the mind, the power of imagination, and nervous excitement." Faith

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in Jesus, among His disciples, arose, he would confess, as the first effect of what was in Jesus, but popular conceptions soon transferred Him into a temperature in which they could not fail to put forth numerous unhistorical shoots, one ever more miraculous than another, in most luxuriant growth. What is the result? A little group of German radicals, Pfleiderer, Zimmern, Jensen, A. Crews, out-Herod Strauss, and confess, one, that "the Christ of the Church has been formed out of those myths and legends which are the common property of religion all over the world, more particularly having their origin in Judaism, Hellenism, Mithraism, the Græco-Egyptian religion, Zoroastrianism, and even Buddhism;" while another descants upon the contribution of Babylonian mythology to the Biblical portrait of Jesus, and still another, as if this were not criticism run mad, soberly declares that "this Jesus has never lived upon the earth, neither has He died, because He is nothing but an Israelitish Gilgamesh legend."

Taking courage from these bizarre extravaganzas, even an American writer frankly acknowledges that we "have n't the means to draw near enough to the historical Jesus to become acquainted with him, and to determine His rank in the scale of being. We can only guess each for himself as to the

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moral and spiritual features and stature of Jesus, and, moreover, it is n't important that we should know." Thus Christ did not create the Church, but the Church created Christ. Paul, unknown writers of the fourth Gospel and the epistle to the Hebrews, and even the Synoptists, created out of the colors of a vivid imagination and Oriental myths, the matchless portrait as we have it in the New Testament. The Church has since put on the finishing touches. "Christ can not possibly be identified with Jesus of Nazareth." He is reduced to "a name, a motto, a flag, to which its adherents may rally." Yet by a jugglery of words those who have, perhaps unconsciously, slipped the moorings of their faith and drifted into this theological anarchy, hold inconsistently to the divinity of Jesus and His power to forgive sins, but in the same sense only that they believe in the divinity of man, and the power of man to forgive sins. Now and then one *consciously* continues the same legerdemain of words. "Do I believe," says Mr. Dole, "in the divinity of Jesus? Yes, surely, in His deity, if you like. But I find the same deity in Isaiah, in Epictetus, in the great and wise Marcus Aurelius. Christ is the name of my better, divine, or ideal self." By which Mr. Dole proves his own deity. One is reminded of the witty remark of a

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friend at Arnold's death, "Poor Arnold, he will not like God."

II. ARGUMENTS NOT IMPRESSIVE.

1. While such views occasionally capture some theological stragglers, they never have and never will win the serious assent of thoughtful men. They are not new, but are occasionally resurrected for polemical purposes. They have the grave-clothes about them still, though galvanized into life by some experimenting intellect, dabbling in strange elements. They will not long survive. It were about as easy, concretely, to prove the demoniacal possession of men as their divinity. That one man can forgive the sin of another man, which has no relation to himself, is a scandal to common sense. How absurd it would be even for Abraham Lincoln to claim he could forgive the sins of Cesare Borgia or Judge Jeffries! Yet, like the return of Halley's comet, such notions seem to have a certain periodicity and cause us to get out our telescopes when they return. They serve a useful purpose in discovering how unshaken the orthodox position really is. They also reveal some ambitious teachers in their true character, and serve to eliminate them as safe religious leaders.

2. The original source of this antithesis, Jesus

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or Christ, serves to discredit its denials in advance. Strauss was a German critic and skeptic, so erratic that his views raised a storm of protest in Germany, while German universities, to which he was appointed, refused to receive him. In later life he published "The Faith, New and Old," in which he gave up even his nominal adherence to Christianity. Even an infidel may, perchance, discover a truth, but when he begins to talk disparagingly of Christ, we have a right to be suspicious of his views and sift them most critically. Doing so, we are at once impressed with the fact that, if there has been any writing of fiction, any creations of imagination, any romancing with the historical Christ Jesus, it was not Mark, Luke, John, and Paul, but David Friedrich Strauss and those who have wittingly or unwittingly imbibed some of his strange notions, who are guilty. Sky-larking with the truth has become a fine art with them. By the same canons of historical criticism they adopt, as Nuelsen acutely observes, a very good case could be made out, at some future time, proving that Theodore Roosevelt was a myth, nothing more than a personification of the tendencies and mythological traits now dominant in American life. The legend of the "Big Stick" would be due to Roman elements, representing Jupiter's thunderbolt; the

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large eye-glasses a Norse legend, symbolizing Woden's endeavor to pierce through the heavy clouds of fog covering his head; the hero, smiling and showing his teeth, would doubtless be due to African influence; while some obscure, remote, astral conception lies at the root of that rather puzzling feature, the popular "Teddy Bears," worshiped, at least by children, in almost every house!

3. The fictions such critics weave are mere assertions, unsupported by evidence. Any one can make charges and denials, but thoughtful men call for the evidence. It is not forthcoming. Those who take a semi-mythological view of the New Testament writings have the burden of proof on their shoulders. It is more than they can bear. A preconceived prejudice against the divinity of Christ, or His Saviorship, or the idea of any one paying Him divine honors, or the possibility of the miraculous, is no argument or evidence. The very oldest tradition, that of Mark, as scholars universally concede, nearest in point of time to the life of Christ, contains all these elements. Taking them out of the records, by rude physical excision, there remains not a portrait, but a "faded daguerrotype;" not an object of faith and devotion, but a mythical figure disappearing in the mists and fog of unreality.

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4. The Church did not make Christ. Christ made the Church. Any other statement is playing with words without meaning. If not, the disciples loom larger than their Lord. The minds of the humble fishermen of Galilee, and of Luke the physician, and of John Mark, and of Paul are mightier than Christ's. They themselves are worthy of worship for the creation, out of the impulse of hero-worship, mysticism, and "nervous excitement," of that incomparable Figure and Person which men call Divine. That sublime Soul, that stainless Character, that transcendent Ideal, that majestic Teacher, that world Savior who o'ertops the ages and has ever been regenerating both men and society, leavening nations and empires, founding and spreading the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, the creation of the imagination of these men! Why, here is a greater wonder than the Gospels contain! It out-miracles miracle! There may be some mysteries surrounding the divine-human person of Christ, as there are about all things deep and ultimate, but there is no such incredible and inexplicable mystery as this mythical collusion of Christ's humble disciples after His death. It has nothing to stand on. Even John Stuart Mill scoffed at the notion (as most men do, and must) that there were any among Christ's followers ca-

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pable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Him, or of imagining such a character, still less any among the early Christians of a somewhat later date.

5. The temper of these views is not difficult to discern. It is humanitarian, agnostic, belligerent, and skeptical; it would deny both the need of human salvation and the vicarious atonement of Christ for sin. The notions professed are not new. Those who hold them are the doctrinal descendants of the Jews who crucified the Lord, because, forsooth, "He blasphemed," they said, "in making Himself the Christ, the Son of God." (Matt. 26: 63ff.) Their feelings apparently are not unlike those of the Pharisees, who, when Jesus healed the paralytic, at Capernaum, both of his sins and his palsy, spoke up, "Why doth this Man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mark. 2: 7); and of those fellow-townsmen of His at Nazareth who, when He proclaimed Himself the Messiah, and pointed out their sin in not accepting Him as such, "were filled with wrath and rose up and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong." (Luke 4: 16-32.) "To those who have never touched the fearful burden of human sin and misery," says President Hyde, "with so much as

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the tips of their dainty fingers, the doctrine of vicarious suffering, like all the deeper truths of the spiritual life, must forever remain an unintelligible and impenetrable mystery. The doctrine of the atonement is self-evident to every man who has ever fought intrenched and powerful evil, or sought to rescue the wicked and the wronged from their wretchedness." The assertion that Jesus only forgave the paralytic his sins, in the sense that any man can forgive the sins of a fellow-man, against some one else or against God, is absurd. It does n't even reach up to the conceptions held by the scowling Jews on that occasion when they said, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

6. Views approximating those of Strauss are suicidal. They are in the nature of parasites growing on the tree of Christianity. When the tree dies (and they would really suck the life out of it), they perish also. An array of witnesses to this fact might be summoned. "You can not sever the life from the word," says Dr. Forsyth, "and keep the Church as a vitality detached from the message of the cross." "The error of liberalism," says President Hyde, "is its mechanical separation between principle and its embodiment, and the tendency to dispense with important features of the latter altogether, a mechanical dissection of essentials from

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non-essentials which purchases a barren rationality at the expense of vitality.” (Page 27, “God’s Education of Man.”) The deep root of it all is the growing detachment of this *laissez-faire* theology from the Bible, and its personal misuse. “An ultra-liberalism,” says Forsyth, “in an historical religion like Christianity, has always this danger—that it advances so far from its base as to be cut off from supplies, and spiritually starved into surrender of the world. If it is not then exterminated, it is interned in a region ruled entirely by the laws of the foreign country. It comes to life in a religious syncretism which is too much at home with the natural man to bear the works of the Lord Jesus.” (Page 25, Forsyth’s “Person and Place of Jesus Christ.”) “The final tendency of advanced theology is backwards. Like Moliere’s Ghost, it has improved by growing worse. It relapses to the outgrown Deism of the eighteenth century.” (*Ibid*, page 133.)

III. MODERN CONSTRUCTIVE ARGUMENT FOR THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

We have no desire to detract from the ideal humanity of Jesus, at one as He is with the race. But if He is to men what no other can be, He is also to God what no other can be. A recent study

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of all the published writings obtainable, of the theological schools of America, reveals that the trend is unanimous (except in Unitarian schools) in holding to Jesus' divinity in the usual significance of that term, although the arguments vary in form and emphasis. We select but a few hints from the trend which the modern constructive argument takes.

1. There is the evidence of Christ's unique character. Jesus stands before the world as the One altogether sinless and adorable character of history, the one transcendent personality among men. Only the caviler finds fault with that portrait of a blameless life which adorns the gospel pages, white as the heart of God. Perfect strength and perfect tenderness were mingled in Him, stern morality and infinite compassion. One instinctively feels when they have seen Him that they have seen the Father. "I and the Father are one," does not offend or sound a jarring note. He was somewhat severe with the Pharisees and the hypocrites and the money-changers, but rightly so. God is both love and a "consuming fire." Self-seeking and sordid ambition were absolutely lacking in His Person; self-sacrifice and the vicarious suffering glorified it. He never felt conscience-stricken as other men do, nor asked to be forgiven as other

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men must. He never was convicted of a sinful act, though He challenged His enemies to do so. They were speechless. Some did not fully appreciate His greatness, but those who were nearest to Him, as was Peter, declared, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And so we would say with one (Lanier) of our own time, who got the vision of His radiant richness and purity of soul:

" But Thee, O sovereign Seer of Time,
But Thee, O Poet's Poet, Wisdom's Tongue.
But Thee, O man's best Man, O love's best Love,
O perfect life in perfect labor writ,
O all men's Comrade, Servant, King, or Priest,
Jesus, good Paragon, Thou Crystal Christ."
THOU ART DIVINE!

2. The evidence of His unique relationship to God is witnessed on every page of the Gospels. Both ethical and essential unity with the Father characterized His every act. Functions and attributes are assigned to Him which reach into the divine plane. Never man spake as this Man, never man lived as this Man, never man wrought and died and rose from the dead as did this Man. Modern thought does not lay emphasis upon the virgin birth as a proof of Christ's divinity, because the New Testament does not. It lays greater stress upon His unique character. If that did not prove Him divine, its claim of a supernatural birth could

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not. But admitting His unique character, the virgin birth appears the most natural, harmonious, and congruous mode for the entrance of the pre-existent Christ into human life.

Jesus' close relationship with God the Father and His possession of divine knowledge and power are illustrated in the miracles. He Himself, several times, cites this miraculous power as the proof of His spiritual power. Witness the case of the paralytic, the reply to John the Baptist (Matt. 11), and His appeal to the Jews, "Believe Me for the work's sake." Gordon himself declares that "No man is intellectually justified in denying the possibility of the miracles of Jesus; he does not know enough to deny." Even if it should be demonstrated, a thousand years hence, that all the miracles of Jesus were performed in accordance with superior laws and forces then unknown, but utilized by the superior power and knowledge of Jesus, it would not detract from but rather add to the weight of their witness to His divinity. For, while to the human mind and causality the natural and the supernatural must possess a difference, to the divine mind and power the one is as natural as the other.

The result of the sum total of these evidences was that the disciples of Christ, though inherently

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schooled and steeped in monotheistic ideas, and instinctively prejudiced against according any one divine honors but the great God, are unanimous in declaring Jesus Christ divine, the unique Son of God, and in paying Him adoration and worship as such. That the incarnation entailed a humiliation and self-limitation is alike the testimony of history and revelation. Christ humbled Himself when He forsook the glory He had with the Father before the worlds were. He grew in wisdom and stature. He was not "in Jerusalem and Chicago and the Pleiades at the same time." Nor did God vacate the throne of the universe when Jesus came to earth. That were a great scandal of thought. But Christ was filled, qualitatively, "with all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

3. The evidences of Jesus' self-consciousness and His witness to Himself are unique and weighty. He is never conscious of sin; He never expresses faith in God, but always union and harmony with God. "I and the Father are one." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Whether one argues that this is ethical or metaphysical unity or both, it indicates in either case a self-consciousness altogether *sui generis*. "All power in heaven and earth is given unto Me." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," were Jesus'

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parting claims before ascending to the Father. "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me;" "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest;" "I am the Light of the world;" "I am the Bread of life," are but a few samples of the calm and sane self-consciousness of our Lord's spiritual relationship to men. How absurd, even insane, they would sound on the lips of any other human being. Yet on Jesus' tongue they appear perfectly congruous. The ancient dilemma confronts us here. Either Jesus was, as He claimed to be, divine, or else He was a knave, a megalomaniac, a deceived and deceiving impostor, who has hoodwinked sixty generations of history. Confronted with such a dilemma Christian faith humbly and reverently bows the head and exclaims with Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!"

4. The evidence of the relation of Jesus Christ to human redemption, and man's spiritual dependence upon Him, is also mightily convincing. Some modern thinkers are willing to rest their proofs of Jesus' divinity upon this experimental truth that He saves them. It is an appeal to personal experience, arising out of the claims and promises of the gospel, which any man may demonstrate for himself. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered

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unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." How these words shout themselves, with exultant trumpeting and heavenly glory, to the hearts of men! A myriad men would risk their eternal destiny upon their truth. No one but the Divine Son of God could have such vital and essential relation to human salvation as all this implies.

5. The evidence of the progress of Christianity is a most impressive argument for the divinity of its Founder. Christianity, though years younger than some of its leading rivals among the world religions, is now nearly double the nearest competitor (Confucianism) and fast leaving them all behind in the attractive power of its radiant Lord. Millions, for over sixty generations, have found peace, consolation, salvation, hope of heaven and immortality through faith in Christ. He has captured the imagination of the ages. He is transforming the nations. Civilization and progress are but His handmaids. "Can you tell me who Jesus

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Christ was?" one day asked Napoleon. No reply being made, he said: "Well, then, I will tell you. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and I myself have founded great empires, but upon what did these creations of genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him. I think I understand something of human nature, and I tell you that all these were men and I am a man; none else is like Him; Jesus is more than man. I have inspired multitudes with such an enthusiastic devotion that they would have died for me, but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly present with the electric influence of my looks, my words, or my voice. Christ alone succeeded in so raising the mind of man toward the Unseen that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space. This it is that proves to me convincingly the divinity of Jesus Christ."

But, mark you, only those denominations which take the higher view of Christ's Person are progressing and moving people to mighty missionary, evangelistic, and aggressive endeavor. Those denominations and cults which take the lower view have never wrought these wonders. It paralyzes endeavor and robs Christianity of its highest motive force and attractiveness. The lower view of

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Christ's Person is in truth suicidal. Those who hold the higher view may at times be accused of hanging by main force to some dead limbs of doctrine, but they can never be charged, as can those who hold the lower view, with sawing off the living limb on which they sit. This higher view, says Dr. Borden P. Bowne, "has always commanded the faith of men and always will. If this faith should depart, the attendant religious notions which swarm in its vicinity would soon vanish also. When the sun has set, there may be twilight for a little time, but before long all is night."

And mark you, it is not enough to know the truth. If Jesus Christ be divine, that ought to lead to instant surrender to His mastery, to adoration, and loving sacrifice. Sinful living is the greatest heresy in the world; it is denial and degradation as well. Stand with me at Calvary and Olivet, and pour forth your soul in the spirit of these words, in whose glory Christianity shall conquer the world:

" O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee,
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be."

Do We Need a New Religion?

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—*1 Cor. 3 : 11.*

"Undoubtedly our faith, whether it be of the orthodox or liberal type, must be reorganized. The reorganized faith of the children will not be very different from the faith of the fathers. Some excrescences will have to be lopped off or allowed to fall of their own dead weight under the gentle influence of time. Taken one by one its articles will correspond pretty closely to the articles of the traditional creed, yet they will be rooted in a central spiritual insight."—*President Hyde of Bowdoin College.*

"Thou art my lamp, O Lord, and the Lord will lighten my darkness."—*2 Sam. 22 : 29.*

"For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many."—*Jesus.*

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd . . . and I lay down My life for the sheep."—*Jesus.*

"Who fathoms the Eternal Thought?
Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

"I walk with bare hushed feet the ground
Ye tread with boldness shod;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
The love and power of God."

—*Whittier.*

Cardinal Manning to Henry George:

"I love men because Jesus loved them."

Henry George to Cardinal Manning:

"And I love Jesus because He loved men."

II.

DO WE NEED A NEW RELIGION?

A DREAM we had, some time since, curious and bizarre, as such experiences oftentimes are. A minister, it seems, entered a street car, knelt down in the aisle, and offered up this peculiar prayer: "O Lord, we thank Thee for the effusion of evolution! O Lord, we thank Thee for the effusion of evolution! Amen," and then the vision faded away. That figure with its weird petition has once more risen in consciousness as representative of a type of mind, now that we are having, in certain quarters, a recrudescence of an anti-religious naturalism so characteristic of the last generation. It has been provided with the label "New theology" or "New religion," makes a show of progressiveness, and at times even of orthodoxy, while in truth it contains a belated theology, a denatured gospel, or a de-throned Christ. It professes the utmost devotion to scientific truth and historical accuracy, not unmingled with a substratum of philosophy, which, presented in showy verbiage, has a superficial impressiveness. It is chiefly characterized by its

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omissions, denials, and negations. The Savior of men has been lost out by the way, and the radiant ideal Portrait of the Gospels has faded into a dim and filmy wraith. The myth of Jesus Christ is the final obsession of such minds possessed; albeit such an extraordinary challenge of history and affront to common sense as extremists offer need scarcely be taken seriously. Let us examine a little closer the extraordinary propositions made, and discover whether we do, after all, need a new religion.

Religion and theology are not identical. Religion generically denotes a mode of divine worship, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity. Specifically, it means one's personal relation to God and conformity to Christian faith and practice. Theology, on the other hand, is the system of doctrines, conceived to be the statement of truths concerning a particular religion. No living religion is without something like a doctrine. Doctrine, however, does not constitute religion, but only what men believe and think about it.

Do we need a new theology? That depends upon the kind we have. Theology, or the attempt to state the eternal and essential truth of Christianity, is not a static science and may be very faulty, whether new or old. If it is merely a re-

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hearsal of what some men thought in the Dark Ages, with its mediævalism and scholasticism, we need something new. Like the belief in ghosts and witches these empty chimeras of the mind should be relegated to the realm of theological curiosities, characterizing a dead past. If, on the other hand, a particular theology is a freehand dealing with the essentials and eternal truths of the gospel, the propagation of religious vagaries in the name of intellectual freedom; if it tears out the very heart of Christianity, leaving but a medley of philosophy, semi-religious ethics, and moral platitudes, the world has no need of that kind of a theology.

The attempt to force that upon the modern mind is doomed in advance to failure. *Laissez-faire* in attitude, humanistic in tone, and lacking in much that is essentially Christian, it loses the attractive power of the Great Magnet of the ages. Leaving behind its Source of inspiration and life, like a hopeless anæmic it is doomed to die of religious inanition. "An ultra-liberalism in an historical religion like Christianity has always this danger—that it advances so far from its base as to be cut off from supplies and spiritually starved into surrender to the world. The deep root of it all is its growing detachment from the Bible and its personal misuse." (Forsyth.)

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Some of the affirmations of the new theology so-called, if true, such as the immanence of God, are old as the Hebrews' immortal songs and epics and the Jahvist's story of creation; if false, as in its denials of certain fundamentals of Christ's teaching, are merely the reiteration of that ancient skepticism which seems fated to turn up with the periodicity of a financial panic. It has various advocates and forms. Seeking for some new thing, like the Athenians, they have discovered—what? That the religion of the future will not be based on authority spiritual or temporal; in it there will be no identification of any human being, however majestic in character, with the Eternal Deity; that the term “salvation” is synonymous with the personal “safety” of an individual in this world or some other; that true religion can not have propitiatory, sacrificial, or expiatory elements in it. Another discovers that Christ was not the first Christian; that the real conflict of to-day is between the New Testament and one who believes he knows better; that the religion of Jesus was simply the way a good man thought about God, not Christianity which He founded; that we believe *with* Christ not *in* Him; that we pray *with* Him, not *to* Him. Still others, while not detaching themselves from the New Testament altogether,

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mutilate it by the denial of Christ's divinity and Saviorship, declaring men are saved by character, not by grace. They dispute both the possibility and the fact of the miracles of Jesus, and take flat issue with many of His words and teachings. The logical results of such high-handed criticism, suggests Dr. Forsyth, is that these critics should be led finally to pray *for* Christ, and perhaps the rest of us should be driven, in gratitude to this great benefactor and lover of the race, as the sense of our spiritual obligation to Him, to lift our soul as Parsifal ends, "Redeemed be the Redeemer."

"Lord God, who savest men, save, most of men, Christ Jesus, who saved me."

We spare you! do we need a new theology? Not of this brand. Its vagaries, negations, and omissions invalidate it. We are suspicious. It doth protest too much. These revolutionary assaults upon the faith are but "a little cloud, they will soon pass over." They are due to long dwelling in the atmosphere of naturalism. A mere statement of many of them at once disproves their credibility. The great mass of Christian believers, for sixty generations, have scarcely been so grossly deceived, and future generations never will be. Only a few "modern" minds, each with his own intellectual "big stick," holds such views; "*the mod-*

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ern mind," a composite of millions of up-to-date Christian thinkers, still clings to the historical and experimental reality of the Divine Savior, salvation not by character but unto character, the credibility of Christ's reported words and deeds, the trustworthiness of the New Testament miracles, the truth of Jesus' resurrection, the eternal glory, power, and attractiveness of the Cross.

But do we need a new religion? Some substitute for an improvement on Christianity? Would Confucianism do? China is too weighty an argument against that. Likewise India against Buddhism, with its three hundred million gods, its caste system, wretchedness, and awful degradation. Bishop Thomson, beholding the age-long result of Buddhism at the River Ganges, said, "This is Hell!"

Perhaps some new theologian would like to revert to the crude and sensual polytheism of the ancient Romans. But,

" On that hard Roman world, disgust
And secret loathing fell,
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell."

Or, peradventure an eclectic substitute for Christianity, compounded of all the elements of truth in every known religion, purged of all errors,

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is needed? We shall wait until we see the compound before recommending it. Such attempts have never conspicuously succeeded. Let a man sit down and write one proverb that compares with Solomon's; let him compound his new religion and then offer himself to be crucified for it, and the world will take notice. Christianity is not a failure yet. Let it first be tried. Let its ethics become the universal, social, and moral standpoint; let its Savior become the universal Redeemer; let the Divine Life, mediated to men through Christianity, become dominant,—His mastery, moral and spiritual law, and this old world will become very heaven. Christianity is the final religion. Its improving must come in the living of it.

CHRISTIANITY ESSENTIALLY A REDEMPTIONAL RELIGION.

No religion or theology is true or final which leaves out the cross, an atoning Savior, a redeeming Christ. Any theology which does is not essentially Christian, for it has cut out its heart. It may be a system of ethics or a religious philosophy, but it is not the Christian religion. By this omission ye shall know them. The radiant, inspiring, and ideal life of Jesus will never lose its inspiration or

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meaning for Christian living, but he who assigns no meaning, in the divine mind or in human experience, to the death of Christ, has denatured Christianity. It is an attempt to play the great symphony with second violins only, the *motif* conspicuously absent. Such an omission makes light of sin. The vicarious suffering of Christ is the only hope of the salvation of sinning men, who never could dream of being saved by and because of their character. An ultra-liberalism which leaves out the cross is sacrificing the secret of power. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." The attractiveness of Calvary has been the source of spiritual conquests over sin, and the mastery of men's hearts from that day when Jesus said, "I come to seek and to save the lost" until now. "Ministers of the cross have always been attacked as the cross has been. Wit has laughed at the cross, philosophy has sneered at it, sin has mocked it, devils hate it, but the cross still stands." (Chapman.)

We do not here and now discuss the various theories of the atonement, whether the juridical, the governmental, the moral influence theory, or some other be the right view; whether Christ's death was sacrificed, expiatory, or something else. We have a workable theory for ourselves,

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which is all that is needed. But a man may benefit from the vicarious death of Christ without even formulating a theory thereof. We must distinguish between the fact and theories about it. Doubtless there have been many caricatures of this great truth. Certainly no ransom had to be paid to the devil before God could save men. We are the ones to be reconciled, not God. No theory like that of Caiaphas, that it was expedient that one should die for the people, is rationally satisfactory. Nor is it morally conceivable that the death of one innocent human being, albeit a sinless one, for another sinning human being, was either a demand of divine justice, or efficacious in atoning for the sins of those who were not called upon to die; nor can it be that God's love was hindered nor His purpose thwarted in saving men before Christianity came. Love and power were His eternally, as well as the plan and purpose of redemption. "The Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world." In the fullness of time that yearning, suffering love found fullest expression in His only beloved Son, given to the world, that whosoever believed in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. His death satisfied the demands both of divine holiness and love, and has real and vital relation to the new life of the forgiven sinner. God's love

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and holiness would never so deal with the sin as to make light of it.

The full meaning of the vicarious death of Christ may be shrouded in mystery, but that does not discredit it. All ultimates, such as God, immortality, love, life, the relation of soul to the body, conversion, the death of Christ, are mysteries. But we may enter into a personal apprehension of them all through vital experience, even when our mental orientation is more or less clouded. I may not be able to tell exactly *how* the Christ redeems me, but I need never doubt the glorious fact.

Four arguments demonstrate that the death of Christ was vicarious and has the deepest significance for human salvation and the Christian life.

1. The principle of vicarious suffering is in harmony with the very nature of things. From the tiny amœba which navigates the invisible seas that divides itself every half hour, up through the love of a mother that loves her child unto the death, upward to the very heart of God, who gave His only begotten Son for a perishing world, it is woven into the very warp and woof of the universe. The death of Christ is but the highest manifestation of the suffering love of God. God in Christ suffered for sin. The thorn crown of Christ was pressed down on His brow, the spear was thrust into His

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side, the divine love was crucified on Calvary. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

2. The New Testament is full of unequivocal declarations of the efficacy of the vicarious suffering of the Christ. "God commendeth His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." "I am the Good Shepherd, I lay down My life for the sheep." "This is My body which is broken for you—this is My blood which is shed for the remission of sins." Christ's death is therefore fraught with the utmost significance to men's salvation. One may not approve of this or that imperfect interpretation of the fact, but to reject the reality altogether can only be done at the sacrifice of New Testament Christianity, taking square issue with it.

3. The efficacy of the vicarious death of Christ

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is demonstrable in Christian experience in the forgiveness of sins and the inculcation of a new life. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." Whether Christianity gives birth to a life that is redemptoral in character, is possible for any honest man to prove for himself in his own experience. Stress is sometimes laid on the ethics of Christianity as its great essential. "But Christianity," says Professor Royce, of Harvard, "is a redemptive religion as well as ethical. What is most vital to Christianity is contained in whatever is essential and permanent about the doctrine of the incarnation and the atonement." "I do not," he says further, "for a moment call in question the original teaching of the Master regarding the Kingdom of Heaven as a vital part of Christianity, but I do assert that this so-called purely primitive Christianity is not so vital, is not so central, is not so essential to mature Christianity as are the doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement when these are rightly interpreted. In the light of these doctrines alone can the work of the Master be seen in its most genuine significance." (Page 483, "Harvard Theol. Review," October, 1909.)

4. The omission of this most vital element of

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Christianity loses to the gospel at once its saving power and attractiveness. The old, old story has in it pathos and tears, love and laughter, salvation and heaven. The "new theology" leaves out the heart of the gospel, which is the Cross. None will be moved by such doctrines to conversion, Christian faith, or conduct; none to tears and repentance. It has no dynamic with which to draw men from sin. It has "crowned whim lord of all." Thus driven back upon the shattered remnants of their own character, men could as soon leap to the skies as to be saved thereby. The people are not fed with such preaching, though they are very hungry. In their great need Christ comes to them as Hugo's good bishop came to Jean Valjean, saying, as he grasped the hand of the man overwhelmed by a divine love flooding him in his bitterness: "My brother, you no longer belong to evil, but to good. I have bought your soul of you. I withdraw it from black thoughts and the spirit of perdition and give it to God."

Certainly it is the preaching of the time-tested fundamental truths of Christianity that has won and is winning men. Wherever Christ is lifted up, men are drawn to Him. Returning from a world tour of evangelism, J. Wilbur Chapman reports: "To-day wherever men and women are loyal to

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Him the work is progressing, and where the workers were in accord with the beliefs of Christianity; where men were questioning the spiritual authority of the Scriptures, or denying or questioning the deity of Christ, the work was affected as by the black hand of death."

No wonder the centuries have been drawn to the Christ as by a lodestone, and the song of the redeemed in a thousand moods and keys is the sweetest song of the ages—

" In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time.
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

The Christian pulpit is no place for the propagation either of doubts and skepticism or the undigested dogmatism of a theoretical or scientific doxy which leaves out the Cross. It seems too much like wounding Cæsar with a Brutus's stab. What is most astonishing is to have new religionists set themselves up after the manner of Louis of France, saying, "La Veritas C'est Moi"—"I am the truth"—when their gospel is logically as frangible as a St. Rupert's tear or as dogmatic as a triphammer. This pains the devout, produces skepticism among the unfamiliar with theology, and does not save a single man from sin. It becomes

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a serious question whether those who espouse such views can consistently retain a Christian pulpit. As for the people who look for light and receive none, we are reminded of that old Indian chief who came from the West to St. Louis in the early days, seeking more light about the Christian religion, but who returned disappointed and discouraged over his failure to receive light about it. "I came to you," he said, "over a trail of many moons from the setting sun. I came with one eye partly opened, for more light for my people who sit in darkness. I go back with both eyes closed. My people sent me to get the white man's Book of Heaven. I am going back the long, sad trail to my people of the dark land. You make my feet heavy with the burden of gifts, and moccasins will grow old in carrying them, but the Book is not among them."

What Shall Be Done About
Miracles?

"Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, 'Art Thou He that should come or look we for another?' And Jesus answered and said unto them, 'Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.'"—*Matt. 11 : 2-6.*

"Though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him."—*Jesus.*

"For in Him we live and move and have our being."—*St. Paul.*

"If God sat alone in the heavens, like a block, He would not be God."—*Luther.*

If the immanent God were caught within the wheels of natural law and necessity, like a squirrel imprisoned within a cage, revolving it endlessly, but unable to escape, He would not be the immanent God.

"To all serious minds, part of the evidence of the power of Jesus Christ will always be the epic of miracle embedded in His career."—*Gordon.*

"Yet, ye who wait for those calm suns to rise
That kissed our sires, when, to their awestruck eyes,
Mirage and miracle made white the skies,
Know, reverent skeptics, plighted to the truth,
That miracles persist in solemn sooth;—
This violet I scan when spring's astir—
Shy beauty, sweet to the blue heart of her—
If I could solve her secret I should pluck
All meaner mysteries bare; these roots that suck
From some black soil the pigments that will paint
A rose's cheek or make the senses faint
With lilac or syringa—solve me these,
And I will read what miracles you please."

—*Knowles.*

III.

WHAT SHALL BE DONE ABOUT MIRACLES?

THIS is by no means an academic question. Not alone without but within the Church have recently arisen questionings, doubtings, denials, and not a little loose thinking concerning this subject. It is now the point of attack or theological innuendo on the part of some who have been thinking on the naturalistic plane. Their mental processes all tangled up with materialistic conceptions of the universe, whose laws seem to be self-operating, as certain and unchangeable as fate, they have hastily concluded that no such thing as a miracle of any type is possible, and that only the gullible entertain a contrary conviction.

No distinction is made between those well-attested miracles of the New Testament of high order, fundamental in significance to the founding of Christianity, bearing the marks of worth, dignity, and genuineness, and many alleged secular mira-

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cles, which, on careful examination, fail when put to the tests of trustworthiness and value. Some of the semi-mystical advocates of a strictly mechanical conception of the universe seem to forget there is such a thing as divine immanence. Or, finding miracles to be of little religious service to them, they forget that this is not the state of mind in which many, in perplexity, discover themselves. It is possible for academicians to become so highly specialized, even in religious thinking, as to be of very little service to those who look to them for the Bread that cometh down from heaven. They are not unlike Darwin's highly specialized type of pigeons, which developed bills so short they could not feed their own young, compelling him to bring in some of the common, undeveloped variety to preserve their offspring. Added emphasis was given, in our own mind, to this fact by a recent interview with a young student on this subject, whose instructor had raised more doubts than he had allayed on Biblical questions, and had notably succeeded in unsettling his mind upon the great fact of the New Testament miracles, including that of the resurrection.

Hence I beg you to believe our discussion is not merely a theoretical one. Doubts are like dragons' teeth, producing perennially, in varying forms and

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modern guise, a new brood and progeny from ancient stock, perennially slain. It is a remarkable fact that a question is not always settled finally when it has been repudiated by one generation. Like a cancerous growth, cut away at one point, it oftentimes crops out again in another. Each generation, as each individual, has to fight over many of the intellectual battles of the ages ere firm foundation is found for its own footing. To be in doubt is no sin, but a great pity. It enervates faith and paralyzes activity. Only the careless and superficial have never had a conflict of soul over truth. There is danger, however, in the process. Entangled as in a labyrinth, a man may never find his way out. One needs all the mental acuteness and boldness of storied Theseus before he can slay his Minotaur. Our purpose is to indicate the method by which the mythical, theological monster, which has been begotten by a spirited but, we affirm, hopeless attack upon the New Testament miracles, may be slain. When we consider the arguments frequently advanced, the wonder is, as with the tree-toad and his rattle, so great a noise is made by so small a creature. But an assault upon this ancient fundamental of the Christian faith at once arouses our attention.

Curiously enough, the distinction between

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magic and miracle is not made by many in their discussions. There is a vast difference between the two. Legerdemain awes and astonishes gullible credulity, while miracle produces faith. Magic effects wonder; miracle, worship. The difference between the two is the better apprehended by a comparison of the trick of a prestidigitator and a miracle of Jesus. It is related that after a magician had extracted innumerable coins from the dog of certain Indians, simply by stroking his fur, much to their astonishment, they refused to sell the dog at any price, and secretly conveyed him away and killed the unfortunate canine, only to discover that "all the silver coins had already been extracted." Contrast with this sleight-of-hand trick that noble example of miraculous power, sympathetic love, and divine compassion displayed by Jesus in the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum (Mark 2). The former was an obvious hoax, ending only in chagrin and disgust; the latter was a masterful act of the Son of man, who not only released a palsied man from his physical disability, but produced a profoundly religious effect upon the spectators.

Whether any alleged miracle is historical fact or not must be judged on its own merits. Do a sufficient number of credible witnesses testify to its

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occurrence? Is it in harmony with the divine character and worthy of His great purposes? Does it manifestly serve a high moral and spiritual end and impress men healthfully? Weighed by these criteria, the false and the true are as readily distinguishable as stubble and gold. It is needless to add that the recorded miracles of Jesus gloriously stand the test.

Penetrating deeper than the examination of a concrete miracle in particular, the abstract arguments against the possibility of the miraculous are shallow and illogical. To cite but one or two examples: Hume defines a miracle as "a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of Deity." Thus defined, he repudiates it as impossible and incredible. Put in a slightly different form, it is alleged that "a miracle is a violation of the observed uniformity of Nature, and therefore unscientific and irrational." But no Christian theist nowadays would accept such a definition. These contentions rest on two assumptions equally false and untenable. 1. That a miracle is a transgression or violation of a law of nature is a pure assumption, and probably a false one. It is not necessarily a violation at all, but may be only the exercise of a higher or more powerful law which for the time being matches or neutralizes other

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natural laws. Had our scientific friend, the doubter of the miraculous, never seen an aeroplane in flight, he might deny, with much weight of historicity and improbability to emphasize his argument, that any material device heavier than air had been or could be so constructed as to lift a man from the earth and carry him in flight. He could stoutly and with some show of reason maintain that such a manifest absurdity had never been observed by him; that it would, in truth, be a violation of the law of gravity which holds material substances, heavier than air, down to the earth. Our theoretical doubter might rise to remark that only those persons with as light a mentality as Darius Green, who came to catastrophe in his flying machine, would even dream of such an impossibility. Nothing would awaken him except a collision with the cold, hard, practical fact that the Wright Brothers had achieved the feat anyway, his theories to the contrary notwithstanding. By the same argument the flight of a bird is a constant miracle, being a "violation" also of law. The lark, which by superior powers uses its wings and the very air itself to transgress the law of gravity as it rides off into the morning to hymn its matins at heaven's gate, would be theoretically an impossibility. Indeed, the placing of a burden on our backs by

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superior physical strength, or the lifting of a book from the table by the same sign, would be violating Nature's laws. Were these things not so common-place, some wiseacre would even now be printing a book explaining their impossibility. The falsity of the assumption is sufficiently apparent. No miracle recorded in the New Testament is theoretically impossible or incredible when conceived as the result of the operation of superior knowledge and the possession of superior laws and powers on the part of the miracle-worker. By the same sign, the possibility of talking across long distances, through the operation of that great modern invention, wireless telegraphy, would to the patriarchs have seemed credible only as the result of a miracle, if indeed it would not have been considered a fantastic dream. By the same method of argument as that offered against the possibility of miracles, Abraham and Job, Moses and David would be perfectly justified in doubting or denying the probability of such a mode of communication. Would it not have been considered a miracle, indeed, if Lot had telegraphed by wireless to Abraham for aid when he had been captured and carried off by the barbarous kings of the desert, and not have been compelled to await the result of the summons of a swift but weary footman, who ran

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at all speed over the sandy miles intervening? If Moses could only have told Pharaoh by wireless what God threatened if he did not release the Hebrew children, it would have seemed a greater wonder than the rod and flies and frogs that afflicted Egypt at his command. How astonished would Zaccheus have been to receive a wireless communication from Jesus when He was many miles from Jericho, stating He would dine with him on a given day! The limits of such plays of the imagination are boundless. According to the light and knowledge of the ancients such an event was never even dreamed of, and would scarcely have been credited, if affirmed, because they could not relate it to the natural laws of which they were then cognizant. It would pass their powers of comprehension and experience and be considered a miracle. Yet we know such to be contrary to fact, and by superior knowledge and use of natural laws men are able to achieve these wonders.

2. The second false assumption in Hume's definition is that he, by inference, rules out the immanent God from vital relation to the ordinary laws of nature, and draws a baseless causal distinction between the natural and the supernatural. Nature, in this loose mode of thinking, is conceived as a closed system, the offspring of unchanging and

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inviolable necessity, a mechanism as certain as fate in its operations. Inasmuch as these rationalists have never seen God anywhere, whether among the stars, or on the seas or upon the earth, they hastily conclude that there is no need of the hypothesis of an immanent God, in whom we live and move and have our being; or if there is a God He certainly never issues any order; energizes by His will or intelligence to vary the ordinary mode of the operation of natural laws, or neutralizes them by His supreme power, never brings superior forces to bear upon, outweigh, or counterbalance the uniform mode of the natural process. Wise fool! who hath said in his heart there is no God; or who hath vainly imagined he knew all about the great God; who illogically inferred that either natural or supernatural could exist without Him, or that He could not neutralize or change the operation of any law or force in the universe which He created and upholds by the word of His might! We are reminded of Chesterfield's sophistry when he said, "I have lived to be an old man and have never seen God." Or Lalande's profound acumen, who declared, "I have swept the starry heavens with my telescope and have nowhere found any traces of God." The truth is, no philosophical doctrine now-a-days has such intellectual respectability or

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scientific status as that of Divine Immanence. By which is meant that all laws and forces of nature, all potencies and possibilities of the universe depend upon His living will and intelligence. The natural, as well as the supernatural, therefore has its abiding source and cause in this fundamental reality, the eternal will and intelligence of the immanent God. A natural event is one which comes in the uniform and familiar order; the miraculous is one which defies reduction to the ordinary rule, and is meant to attract the attention of men or transfix their minds so as to awaken them from immersion in the materialism of sense, or produce some great moral or spiritual effect. God would certainly not disturb the sanity of men by frequent deviations from His customary ways of doing things. Any other course would produce madness among men. Think, for a moment, what absolute chaos would result if we could not depend upon the uniform operation of the law of gravity. But why should it be thought a thing incredible with any theist in these days, that He who holds all laws and forces in His hands, as a mighty charioteer would his fiery steeds, could not guide them, drop a rein perchance; cause them to race and charge, or grow still and calm under the guidance of His mighty hand? The burden of proof is

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on the objector. His *a priori* assumption of the impossibility of a miracle, as an expression of the will of the immanent God, begs the question.

Another academic argument against miracles perennially put forth is that we of this day and age have never seen an authenticated miracle. They are not in harmony with the present experience and observation of mankind, it is said, and there is a growing disposition among scientific men to deny all alleged miracles, including those recorded in the New Testament as incredible. They are empirically improbable, and the records of these marvelous events are to be accounted for on the basis of hero-worship, and the imaginative romancing of a crude and uncritical age when the bizarre, the marvelous, and the magical were superstitiously credited by popular credulity. They are relics of a period of superstition and mythology, as the advance of modern knowledge and science has demonstrated. But hold! such hasty inferences are not new. Young Gideon himself thus addressed his God over 1,200 years before Christ: "O, my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why is all this befallen us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us of?" (Judges 6: 13.) Yet this self-same Gideon had a demonstration later of God's miraculous power when it pleased

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Him to exercise it. Because men can not themselves see with their own eyes the works of God they are tempted to cast aspersion on their reality. How convincing a demonstration is it for one primed and plumed in the proud position of modern science to deny miracles, because, forsooth, he has never *seen* one. We have never seen a mastodon, a plesiosaurus, a pterodactyl, nor a multitude of paleontological creatures now extinct. Yet their discovery and classification, through fossils, are the proud trophies of modern science. Nevertheless, no one living ever saw these strange creatures, whose bones are wired and displayed in museums. Nor could one readily refute the obstinate ignoramus who never saw the inside of a museum, if he should insist upon a similar argument of denial.

A showy attempt has recently been made by a popular theologian to demonstrate that belief in the miracles of the New Testament has no religious value, and that the New Testament revelation of Christianity would be uninjured by their entire surrender. He asserts that he is not concerned with a destruction of belief in miracles, but rather desires to propose a method of looking at the essentials of the Christian faith that will allay the perplexities of some within the pale of Christianity itself, who are honestly suspicious of the

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reality of the miraculous. Miracles, he declares, have been under suspicion among educated minds in all ages. "Miracles have gone because the fashion of the world is against them." The dilemma in which he finds himself is this, "that while the denial of miracles can not be logically sustained, the reality of miracles is unlikely. Miracles are logical possibilities and natural improbabilities." "The unverifiable," he adds, "can never remain an essential part of reasonable faith." The universe is a mechanism, the operation of its laws as certain as fate, any suspension or violation of them, antecedently discredited by science. Proceeding, he attempts to show how limited a relation a belief in miracles bears to vital faith, and that the great recorded miracles of the New Testament, including Jesus' resurrection, really becloud the facts they were designed to glorify. In fine, he never has had any religious use for miracles, and thinks others do not regard them as essential.

The theologian in question begins by declaring he has no interest in denying miracles, proceeds first to cast doubt upon them, and then to discredit them with patronizing compassion on those who believe them. Writing, as he claims, to allay doubts, he at once raises and multiplies them. His

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attitude is either a big "If" or a big "Nay." This would be fatal to the faith of many Christians. In his loose method of thinking, a fatalistic and mechanical conception of the universe is presupposed, and the immanent God is thus shut up within the necessities of a materialistic mechanism, like a blind Samson, grinding in the mills of the Philistines. Betraying some characteristics of a mystic, he wings his way to the stars, and being far above any need of an historical or miraculous ladder, up which others must toilsomely climb, he kicks it from beneath the feet of those who are not blessed with wings. Nor can any amount of explanation save his discussion from a practical discrediting of the great facts of the Christian religion, including the resurrection of Jesus, on which the Christian hope of immortality is based. By implication also, his argument results in a virtual abrogation of that miracle of miracles, the Person of Jesus Christ. When those within the pale of the Christian Church begin to cast suspicion on the New Testament miracles, it is time to ask where they are drifting. The end can only mean religious anarchy.

Let us observe, in conclusion, how the thorough-going application of the abstract denial of miracles would affect the New Testament records them-

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selves. One might as well take an ax and literally hew them to pieces, as to attempt to cut out the miracles of Jesus and their intimately related context as recorded in any of the Gospels. Mark, the simplest, earliest and concededly best accredited, will serve as an example. Expunging the miracles from the text, but a few choice unrelated sayings and incidents remain. This new doxy would have to begin by gouging out the baptism of our Lord and the healings at Capernaum from Chapter one, leaving only a half dozen lines of Jesus' early message. Practically all of Chapter two must go with the restoration of the paralytic. Too, the multitude without it would have had little cause to resort to the seaside. From Chapter three would be discarded the healing of the man with the withered hand, and in addition the charges of Jesus' enemies, who confessedly could neither deny or discredit His healing power, but merely accused Him of working these miracles by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. The whole of Chapter five must be omitted, with its cure of the man afflicted with a legion of devils; the woman with an issue of blood and the raising of Jairus' daughter. In Chapter six Jesus' charge to the seventy must be mutilated, as He gave them miraculous power, together with instructions how to use

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it. The narration of Jesus' walking on the water must go. In Chapter seven but one-half would remain, expunging the healing of the Syrophenician's daughter and the cure of the blind man. The account of the feeding of the four thousand with the loaves and fishes must be denied, as also the narratives of the transfiguration on the mount and the healing of the demoniac boy in Chapter nine. I need not proceed. The book would be so mutilated as to leave but a sorry residue behind, unconsigned to the wastebasket. One might just as well tear the leaves of his New Testament to pieces and expect to have a perfect portrait of Jesus, and derive spiritual uplift, light, comfort, and salvation from the process. The reality of Jesus Christ Himself and the great facts of His incarnation, His sonship, His sinlessness, His lofty words clear as light, His acts and deeds, and finally His resurrection after the crucifixion are incontrovertible as history, and are by no means the introduction into the "supreme sanctuary of humanity, of the vulgar appeal to sense, the tricks and feats of the wizard." If there have been any feats and tricks of the wizard, they are the endeavor of the new doxy to destroy some of the foundation pillars of Christianity and expect the

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superstructure to survive. We do not fear, however. They have but a feeble strength. They will not make a great impression. The glory and wonder of Christ abide.

“ Hammer away, ye hostile bands,
Your hammers break, the anvil stands.”

Was the Resurrection of Jesus
a Myth?

"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God ; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ."—*1 Cor. 15 : 14, 15.*

"With regard to this Christian faith, I wish to say, as a person having some knowledge of the standing of such doctrines in philosophy and in the court of reason, that our old faith is at least as rational as any other. It can give as good an account of itself as any other. And then the 'survival of the fittest' takes the case, and finally hands down the decision. It has been handing down one, and it has never been reversed. From that decision there is no appeal."—*Borden P. Bowne.*

"The first of all gospels is that a lie can not endure forever."—*Carlyle.*

"For the great hereafter I trust in the Infinite Love as it is expressed to me in the life and death of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."—*J. G. Holland.* (Engraved as an epitaph on his tombstone in the Springfield cemetery.)

"Just as science finds in all phenomena the manifestation of an unseen, ever-present Force, so the investigator to-day, turning over the Christian records, feels himself at every point in contact with the mystery that made them possible. It represents, with the accuracy of a hair balance, the impression made upon its writers by Christ's personality."—*Brierley.*

"Let our windmills and pulp-beaters run a little longer, and we will turn you out a body of divinity to please the prettiest sentiment. The name of Jesus still appears, not in the constitution, but in the by-laws. He has an influential, disciplinary place as sergeant-at-arms, but He does not sit with the council."—*B. D. Hahn.*

IV.

WAS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS A MYTH?

THE words of Paul ring true. They are the epitome of the unanimous apostolic witness to this great central truth of Christianity, the resurrection of Christ. Sane men do not question the well established historical fact of the crucifixion of Christ. The fact of the resurrection is equally indubitable. These two historical events are the giant arches on which the temple of Christianity is reared. If one is looking for the essence of the Christian religion, as exhibited in the New Testament, he need not search longer for the Holy Grail, but simply pause and drink deep from this golden chalice. "Nothing that Jesus was or did, apart from the resurrection, can justify or sustain the religious life which we see in the New Testament," says Denny. It is the greatest foretoken of immortality known among men. "Only very ignorant persons," declares Hillis, "say any longer,

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‘No one ever came back.’” Jesus came back. “Before Christ lived and died,” says one, “the Tuscans made each tomb face the west, for the soul’s sun had set never to rise. After Christ tombs faced the east, for the sun had disappeared to stand again upon the horizon clothed with untroubled splendor.” The sons of men with an infinite longing for the deathless life have at last found an argument that transforms the sage’s better guesses, the analogies of nature, the instinct’s quenchless dream and reason’s “perhaps” into a rational certainty.

1. Yet there are a few voices that would call us away from the New Testament faith and fact. It is sometimes perplexing to thoughtful people to discover this, not in the ranks of the enemy, but in the house of friends, and among men who are by no means wanting in sympathy with the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. To the untutored it is confusing, if not faith-destroying. It is the apotheosis of criticism when it loses its vision so badly as to deny the resurrection of Jesus. One is persuaded by the self-sufficient temerity of these learned men that they do not believe in the New Testament because they did not write it. Coming to the investigation of the subject with prepossessions diametrically opposed to the historical

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facts recorded therein, they beg the question in advance, and pronounce verdict before trying the case. Dogmatic in denial, no one can tell them anything. They have forsaken the open mind and closed their eyes at the gates of life. As Sojourner Truth said to a certain man, who, at Fanueil Hall, had made a fierce attack upon abolition, as she tapped her forehead, "Honey, I would tell you something, but I see you have n't anything to carry it away in." Nothing can demolish their prejudices except a collision with facts. Arguments will not avail. We must simply await the result of the solid impact on their minds of something flintier than reason. To deny the sun, however, does not prevent its shining, nor our enjoying its light, even if others turn blind eyes toward the glorious orb of day and discover no light.

2. But let us be fair. Few thoughtful men nowadays doubt or deny the great fact of Jesus' resurrection, but merely the reality and historicity of the New Testament appearances and records of that fact. They make a distinction between the Easter faith and the Easter message. The one is real, the other is doubtful or mythical; the first is independent of the New Testament, the other is the legendary addendum of pious but fraudulent writers of fiction, who objectified the primitive

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faith of the early disciples into the imaginary appearances usually credited as truth. The great soul of Jesus, they say, could not be holden of death. If there is immortality for any one, there must certainly be for Him. He is but the first-born among many brethren. Because we all shall live, He liveth also. On this hypothesis, there is no empty tomb to be accounted for, either by a theft or a swoon theory. That the New Testament religion is dependent upon a faith in the resurrection of Jesus may be admitted, but not upon the historical fact. "Whatever may have happened at the grave," says Harnack ("What is Christianity?" English translation, page 162), "one thing is certain; this grave is the birthplace of the indestructible belief that death is vanquished, that there is life eternal."

How that faith was created there is no agreement. One says it was due purely to subjective exaltation and excitement, as the disciples meditated upon the greatness of the crucified Lord. But this drops the resurrection from the realm of the psychological into that of the pathological. It is, moreover, contrary to a normal reaction from the intense gloom, hopelessness, and depression into which, for three days, the disciples were plunged. Instead of apathy, lethargy, and spiritless despair,

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contrary to all their expectations, within a few hours the disciples were lifted out of depression and disillusionment into exaltation, courage, enduring and unanimous conviction. Hallucination is too flimsy a foundation on which to build Christianity. But another says that Jesus did not really appear, but so wrought upon the minds of the disciples that they thought the risen Lord really appeared to them. But here is a greater wonder than the wonder itself. It outmiracles miracle. It takes more credulity to believe this than faith to trust the records as narrating fact. Still others would have us believe that there were no Christophanies to account for at all. Their mystical souls need no such insecure props for faith as the imperfect records of the New Testament. They dwell in such a lofty attitude of pure communion with the ever-living Lord that they require no other proof of His resurrection. But, sad to say, it is not given to all Christian men to possess such clairvoyancy or to dwell in the seventh heaven of mysticism, so pure as to hear things it is not lawful for a man to trust on the basis of the historical records. Moreover, faith is not so independent of history as these superior minds would have us believe. The faith and records of the disciples themselves remain to be accounted for. If the disciples

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did not write them, who did? And how do these clairvoyant thinkers know so much about the records anyway? By "contemporaneous revelation?" The accounts of the resurrection are at least as trustworthy as the New Testament as a whole. Again, there is no reasonable motive for thus playing magic with the credulity of men, nor for patching up or manufacturing ancient history to order after this unscrupulous fashion. What, too, shall be said of the supernatural collusion that could perpetrate and perpetuate such a crude apotheosis as this? It passes comprehension.

II. The temper underlying this "superior" handling of the historical records of the resurrection is not difficult to determine. It has one of two aspects:

1. Your philosophical critics, immersed in a naturalistic and mechanical conception of the universe, worshipping a necessitarian reign of law, as the only thing admissible to the modern scientific mind, deny the miraculous in general, and the miracle of the historical resurrection in particular. They assert, indeed, that God is immanent in His world, but make also a mental fetich of natural law as a universal necessity certain as fate, which it is impossible, even for the omnipotent God, to tran-

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scend. Their immanent God never has, never will, never can alter the observed uniformity of His acts, as expressed in natural forces and laws. All is natural, and there is no supernatural. But such an impotent, immanent God is no God at all; he is like a mouse caught in a trap, revolving his wheel, but unable to escape. The Christian conception of the immanent God is far different. In Him we live and move and have our being. In this sense the natural is supernatural. But while a distinction may abide for human thinking and power between the natural and the miraculous (which a thousand years of progress in knowledge may not remove) for the divine mind and power one is as natural as the other. In this sense is the supernatural natural, and the natural supernatural. To live again is not so wonderful. That we live at all is the great miracle. A miracle is not a violation of the natural order. God does not violate His own acts. No one but Hume and his belated disciples would accept such a definition of the miraculous. That is simply a man of straw, set up for brave (?) men to thump and pummel and burn. That God would not and does not often depart from His uniform operation or mode of self-expression in natural law goes without saying. To do so often would lead to madness, and no man could be cer-

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tain of what is now the most commonplace certainty. No man knows enough to deny the possibility of the miraculous. This arrogates slightly too much knowledge to isolated thinkers living nineteen hundred years after the fact. Perhaps they have had some special "contemporaneous revelation" from heaven? We call for the credentials, however. Until then we shall run the risk of intellectual naïvete and accept the witness of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and the writer of the Hebrews, to say nothing of the countless ages of Christian believers since. "Neither natural science nor history can deny the resurrection except by claiming for themselves to exhaust the truth and reality of the universe—a claim the untruth of which is self-evident." (Denny, "Jesus and the Gospel," page 115.)

2. Your *historical critic*, using his little "science, falsely so called," as the measuring rod of the universe, arrives at a similar conclusion with the naturalistic philosopher, but by another route. To get back to Jesus is not the unimportant thing your philosopher would have you believe. The important concern is to get back to the real Jesus, not that distended, enlarged figure retouched by some imaginative religious novelist, who added his own ideal glorification to the real

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portrait. What we find, says our wise critic, in the historical Jesus is not the author or object of the Christian faith, but just a man like ourselves, but ideal in character and noble in soul—"a pious, humble, good man, who called others to trust the Father as he trusted Him, and to be children of God like him." Of course the miracles must go, including the historical resurrection of Jesus. The Christian religion has been a mistake, a delusion from the beginning, valuable for the common herd, perhaps, but incredible to this oversoul. Getting beneath the rubbish of primitive tradition and faith your historical archæologist discovers the real Jesus. The Christian Church and the earliest disciples, from time immemorial, have been the victims of a gigantic though pious fraud. O wondrous art, thrice exalted, that could conceive and achieve an age-long hoax like this! But he, the critic, has just found it out. His contemporaneous revelation has just discovered it to him! But what have we left? Nothing but a wraith of Jesus, not an historical person; inspiring neither faith nor love, only piety. Nor will it attract men sufficiently to bring them to the Cross for forgiveness and salvation. This is *a priori* dogmatism, as prejudiced as that of the Spanish inquisitors. Only very courageous souls would dare espouse it.

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But enough! The world simply does not credit all this. This theory, if accepted, would be a "stupendous impeachment of Providence." But we need have no fear it will ever do much damage. Truth is, as Professor Denny says, "it is a mere failure in intelligence—a sort of cowardice, to speak plainly—which makes people nervous about Jesus and the Gospels."

III. CONSTRUCTIVE ARGUMENTS FOR THE HISTORICITY AND REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS ARE NOT WANTING.

1. If there has been no resurrection, there would have been no New Testament at all. The Christian religion, inspired by a deathless faith in a living Lord, was preached for years before ever one word of the New Testament traditions was committed to writing. No faith in a risen Lord, no New Testament!

2. The world would, moreover, never have had a Christian religion had the Lord not risen from the dead. "This is the original wonder, that a dead cause came to life when the friends of that cause became convinced that the Master of it was not dead, but alive. Christianity began in the consciousness of the Lord who had triumphed over death, and who from the unseen inspired and

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guided His apostles and disciples.” (Gordon). “The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is the existence of the Church in that extraordinary spiritual vitality which confronts us in the New Testament.” (Denny, page 107.) Had Jesus of Nazareth not risen from the dead He might have been known, as was Socrates of Athens, for His wise sayings and His blameless life, but never as the Founder of the Christian religion and never as the Savior of men.

3. Another great proof of the reality of the resurrection, is the revolution which was wrought, within three days, in the spirits and minds of the scattered disciples. The lost cause seemed to them dead beyond possibility of restoration. Despair settled down upon them, as their hopes were blasted. But within three days all is transformed. Instead of a dead Master they have a living Lord. “For the original disciples of Jesus, His resurrection changed the entire aspect of the world. Henceforth it lay as in an everlasting sunset, traveling in the glow and fire of His sublime memory. Never again could the disciples look upon the world as it had appeared to them before they knew Jesus; never again could they see a Christless humanity; they lived, suffered, achieved, and died in the divine dream into which Jesus had

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lifted mankind; they beheld the world eternally transfigured in His risen and victorious life." (Gordon, "Religion and Miracle," page 115). The Easter faith and the Easter message are indissolubly intertwined. If one dies, both perish.

4. If there had been no resurrection, the Christian hope of immortality would never have been born. Our faith in the future life would have been little more than a "perhaps," a "guess," an instinctive yearning, an unanswered challenge of the divine "veracity." Jesus, by His resurrection, brought life and immortality to light. All other arguments are open to serious doubt without this great demonstration. They have always existed and have been seen by pagan writers, like Cicero and Socrates and Plato, but were never sufficiently convincing to lift men out of their profound hopelessness and despair.

"If a man die, shall he live again?" was never satisfactorily answered until Jesus smote the tomb itself with death and proclaimed Himself victor over the last enemy of mankind. It is a pleasing but illogical inconsistency for those who deny the miraculous to cling so tenaciously to the hope of immortality, the greatest miracle of all. Far be it from me, by rude hand, to shatter that hope, but a future life is a thing undemonstrable by pure

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science, and is as much a violation of the natural order as are the New Testament miracles. But, even without Jesus, it is a pleasing dream, and we would not be the first to wake men from it. Without a risen Lord, man is but

“An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.”

“In the Christian religion one interpretation has been put upon them (the appearances of the risen Lord). They have been regarded as historical and independent guarantees of a transcendent world, a life beyond death, the sovereignty of Jesus, the reconciliation of the sinful world and God.” (Denny, page 107.) And so all men have become possessors of the Christian faith in the risen Lord, even those least entitled to it. The logical inference is that He is risen in truth.

IV. THE RECORDS THEMSELVES.

1. The records of the resurrection of Jesus are among the very earliest Christian literature of any kind. The first written account, which rings true and bears every mark of genuineness, is set down in the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians by Paul, some twenty or twenty-five years after the fact. Paul was converted and became perfectly familiar

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with the Christian tradition within a year or so after the crucifixion of Jesus. Hence these accepted data were believed and preached by the disciples from the day of Pentecost on, and were never questioned by them or varied in essentials. While there may be minor discrepancies and variations in the accounts of the resurrection as recorded by the reports in the Gospels and Epistles, they all, with unanimity and without variation, agree on the great fact itself of the resurrection of Jesus. *This fact was as real to them as the crucifixion itself.* It transpired not subjectively in their minds, nor was it borne in upon them psychologically by the ideal glorification of their Hero, nor by the conviction that His noble soul could not be holden of death, but it arose spontaneously because they had "seen the Lord." It did not come at different times to one and another, as you would expect a purely psychological phenomenon to transpire. But they all knew simultaneously, the third day, that He had risen. Moreover, the witness is minute and particular, and was never successfully challenged in their day, nor has it been in any other. Paul, who is not usually concerned with the historical facts of Jesus' life, dwells on the resurrection, and names in order a partial list of those who saw the Lord: "He was seen of Cephas, then

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of the twelve; after that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen of James, then of all the apostles." The word "seen" here conveys the idea not of "vision," but of the suddenness of the appearance, startling and compelling. He does not assume that these were the only ones who saw the risen Lord, but gives this full list as a convincing witness of the great fact. "About the fact, the reality of the risen Lord," says Gordon, "there is, however, ultimately no doubt. All the apostles, including the noble skeptic of their band, Thomas, all the time and without the shadow of a doubt, so far as we know, from that date to the end of their lives, believed that Jesus was alive and ruling their hearts out of the unseen." (G. A. Gordon's sermon on "The Great Assurance," page 10.) This resurrection of Jesus was not a reanimation of the dead body of the Lord, subject to the same conditions and limitations as before, subject also to another death, but it was a glorified body which had somehow been transformed by the power of the Lord God Omnipotent. "Glory and power" are the words with which Paul most frequently characterized it, whose vocabulary lacked the one word omnipotent which we possess. No longer was it the

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body of His humiliation, but a transcendent and glorified Being who stood in their presence and turned their souls from gloom and sadness into exultation and victory.

2. Some critics have *magnified certain discrepancies and puzzles which they allege* to exist in the various accounts of the resurrection, as given by the four evangelists and by Paul and the Acts. It is useless to deny that some puzzles do exist. No one has been able to construct a complete chronology of all the recorded appearances. The places of Jesus' appearing are variously recorded by the evangelists. But doubtless none of them meant to record more than one or more typical scenes of the appearances of the risen Lord, and to set down His last great commands. Some are troubled about what they term the "progressive materialization of the appearances," as if it were intentionally produced by the sacred writer to support some particular conception of the nature of the appearance. But there is no trace of motive for such fiction in the New Testament itself. The truth and the important considerations are that all are unequivocal and unanimous about the great central fact. Variations in detail in the accounts of this fact are not only permissible, but expected. Their number and character have been grossly

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exaggerated. Fewer differences will be found even by critical and microscopic investigation than in the accounts printed the next day by eyewitnesses of the martyrdom of Abraham Lincoln.

V. MORAL CONSIDERATIONS WHICH REINFORCE THE HISTORICAL ARE WELL SUMMARIZED BY PROFESSOR DENNY.

1. In the first place, it is the resurrection of Jesus. There is moral congruity here. If it had been claimed of Herod it would have been tabooed. It was at one time claimed of the unspeakable Nero, but always discredited. But of that radiant, lovely Divine Personality it seemed the most natural thing in the world. He could not be "holden of death." (Acts 2:24.) 2. In the second place, the disciples did not preach the resurrection of Jesus merely as historical fact, but they preached the gospel of the resurrection—the fact and its interpretation inseparably one. It constituted a supreme appeal and motive force in the propagation of the new faith. It was a truth to be morally and spiritually as well as historically discerned. "The moral significance of the resurrection flooded like sunlight the ministry of the Apostolic Church, as it became the burden of their preaching, extended Godward and manward, illuminating the

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mystery of the Incarnation, exhibiting the majesty of human life." (Pages 184, 185, Hall's "The Universal Elements of the Christian Religion.")

3. In the third place, men everywhere believed the resurrection as a fact, because they saw it operate as a moral power. The transformation of those depressed and sinful fishermen, the birth and progress of the Christian Church, the conversion of the myriad-minded Paul, all are moral proofs of the fact upon which they are based. 4. The reality of the living Lord is now open to experimental certainty to the trustful soul, and in the last analysis implies Christian experience in all its forms. No risen Lord, no Christian experience. And this is an experimental demonstration which any man now living may test for himself. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," is no puzzle to the Christian heart, living in simple and trustful communion with Him.

In fine, the testimony of the apostles and the Church to the resurrection of Jesus is invulnerable. We know the worst that can be said by the skeptic. He has but a flimsy and unsubstantial foundation for his unbelief. All the mysteries about the fact have not been cleared up. Much remains to us unknown. This does not discredit it. "There is enough mystery in a handful of moss"

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to baffle a scientist for a lifetime. But one may rest his personal salvation, his eternal destiny, and his hope of immortality upon that great transcendent declaration, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

" Lift your glad voices in triumph on high,
For Jesus hath risen, and man shall not die ;
Vain were the terrors that gathered around Him,
And short the dominion of death and the grave ;
He burst from the fetters of darkness that bound
Him,
Resplendent in glory, to live and to save :
Loud was the chorus of angels on high,—
The Savior hath risen, and man shall not die."

Is There a Heaven and Hell?

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."—*Matt. 25 : 46.*

"It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment."—*Epistle to the Hebrews.*

"I saw a man sit by a corpse ;
Hell 's in the murderer's breast : remorse !
Thus clamored his mind to his mind :
Not fleshly dole is the sinner's goal,
Hell 's not below, nor yet above,
'Tis fixed in the ever-damned soul—
'Fixed' quoth Love."

— *Lanier.*

"Who could guess that the mind has so many doors leading directly into hell?"—*A woman to Dr. Worcester.*

"A spark of the eternal God :
And to what end ? How yield I back
The trust for high uses given ?
Heaven's light hath but revealed a track
Whereby to crawl away from heaven."

— *Lowell.*

'We are going to be through this life before very long. The longest life is short when it is over ; any time is short when it is done. The gates will swing to behind some of us soon, but behind all of us before long. And then the important thing will be . . . not what men thought of us, but what He thought of us, and whether we were built into His Kingdom. And if, at the end of it all, we emerge from life's work and discipline crowned souls, at home anywhere in God's universe, life will be a success.'—*Among last public utterances of Dr. Bowne.*

"This body is my house—it is not I ;
Herein I sojourn till, in some far sky,
I lease a fairer dwelling, built to last
Till all the carpentry of the sky is past. . . .
When thou, clay cottage, fallest, I'll immerse
My long cramped spirit in the universe.
Through uncomputed silences of space
I shall yearn upward to the leaning Face. . . .
This body is my house—it is not I.
Triumphant in this faith I live, and die."

—*Written by him a week before Frederick Lawrence Knowles was taken ill with his last fatal illness.*

V

IS THERE A HEAVEN AND HELL?

SOME declare that "heaven is a dream." If so, do not wake me from my dream. Some affirm that "hell is a myth." Ceasing to believe in a thing, however, does not abolish it. Some assert that "there is a heaven, but no hell." But the proofs for one are about as strong as for the other. The wish may be father to the thought. Some say "there is a hell, but no heaven." But that is because they are in hell now, perhaps, in the bitterness of sin and pessimism, and have lost the glorious prospect of paradise. Let us consider what is the truth in this matter, for our object is first to discover the truth, let it lead us where it will, whether to reject outgrown conceptions or to champion new, and having found it, to put it into concrete life and conduct.

There are undoubtedly heavens and hells on earth. Wherever holiness, love, and obedience to

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divine law reigns, there is heaven. Wherever disobedience and hatred rule they beget wretchedness, remorse and retribution, which is hell. Salvation nowadays means deliverance from sin, present sin, let the future be what it may, not from some future hell, sealed by a paid-up insurance policy on some future heaven. "Christ is not a celestial fire-escape," He is the Savior from sin.

Is there a future heaven and hell? Logically we should have first to demonstrate to faith that there is a life beyond the grave; that death does not end all. We pass that now, however, and for the time being assume immortality as the hope and faith of all. Some students in Germany we met not only disbelieved in any future life, but even doubted the existence of God and the soul. Death was pushing off into black nothingness. Identity, self-consciousness, mortal life, thinking, and feeling were swallowed up in the illimitable void. Souls are cast by the grim enemy of mankind to the rubbish heap. Some few men have been known in America to have declared that death was the end of everything for every man. Such views, however, certainly never have and never will win the assent of the vast majority of men, certainly not the Christian. Revelation promises it, reason infers it, science finds no fault with it,

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as John Fiske showed. The argument for immortality is approved by the Scriptures, reinforced by evidences of analogy of the unity of consciousness, by instinctive faith, by an ethical view of the divine dealings with men, by the promises of God. Christ came to bring life and immortality to light.

Materialistic notions both of heaven and hell are fast being abrogated by thoughtful men. God's opulence will doubtless provide a heaven that will surprise our best conceptions and surpass our holiest dreams. There will be surprises when the soul enters the home of the blessed. Those who thought the most about it will probably have to reprint many of those fanciful pictures of that fair world which their human imagination had painted in materialistic colors. Certainly the fiery hell of our forefathers has been abolished forever. Neither the theologian nor the man on the street believes in the existence of such a place as their crude imagination depicted. Yet doubtless there are unrevised creeds which still declare that the punishment of sin shall be the "most grievous torments in soul and body without intermission in hell-fire forever." Jonathan Edwards taught that hell is like a red-hot oven in which the wicked are to be eternally burned for the glory of God, and he preached it with such awful power that men

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screamed out in terror as they listened to him. An old Latin schoolman taught that in hell “an intelligent fire burns the limbs and restores them, feeds on them and nourishes them.” Dante’s *Divina Comedia* was full of these crude literalistic portrayals of the doom of the damned. The figurative language of the Scripture, taken literally, was amended by mediæval schoolmen and the horrors greatly elaborated. Red-hot gridirons, attended by shrieking demons, cauldrons of boiling lead and brimstone poured on the newcomers, a pestilential atmosphere, laden with concentrated diseases, of cloven-footed and horny-headed demons goading and driving the victims up and down steep heights into the awful prisons whence issued the dreadful chorus of shrieks, was a part of the lurid description. Even that devout and brilliant preacher—great not because of such preaching, but in spite of it—Charles H. Spurgeon, solemnly declared that a sinner would be punished by fire exactly like that we have on the earth. “Thy body will lie asbestos-like, forever unconsumed; all thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel on, thy limbs cracking like martyrs in the fire and yet unburnt, thyself put in a vessel of hot oil, pained, yet coming out undestroyed; every nerve a string on which the devil shall ever play his diabolical tune

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of hell's unutterable lament. . . . Many of you will go away and laugh and call me a hell-fire parson. Well, go! But you will see the hell-fire preacher one day in heaven, perhaps, and you yourselves will be cast out; and looking down thence with reproving glance it may be that I shall remind you that you heard the word and listened not to it." This extraordinary quotation from the great divine offends both because of its crude literalism and because of its manifestation of such a spirit in a Christian minister. Such shocking materialistic notions of hell that come to us out of the past are false interpretations of the figurative language of the Scripture, and are due to erroneous ideas of the vindictive wrath of the good Father above. They really cast aspersion upon the divine character. The punishment of the wicked is described severally in the Scriptures as "fire," "the worm that dieth not," and "the blackness of darkness," and yet none of these could coexist literally with the other. Neither darkness nor the worm could conceivably subsist where there was fire. Such a punishment, moreover, would have no logical relation to any sin of the soul and heart, nor naturally grow, as punishment ought, out of sinful acts or conditions as the result of degeneration or depravity. Literal fire can not hurt the soul.

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What is the reality behind all these figurative portrayals? For one to deny that the righteous shall be rewarded with the gift of heavenly bliss, or that the sinful shall be punished in the future, is to take square issue with the teaching of Jesus, the whole trend of the New Testament, and the dictates of reason. Listen to the impressive declarations of Holy Writ: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," said Jesus, "but the righteous unto life eternal." (Matt. 25:46.) "The dead shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (John 5:29.) (Cf. also Rom. 2:1-10.) "But unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey righteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul that doeth evil." (Rom. 2:8.) The fires of remorse, mental anguish over a misspent life, of the compulsion of a self-contemplation and self-condemnation filled with hopelessness and regret, of unused opportunities, of eternal moral losses and impossibilities, of memories of misused talents, of enforced separations, of devilish hatreds and crimes, of impenitent antipathy to unselfishness and the Christian spirit, of spiritual deterioration and dissociation from the true, the beautiful, and the good; in

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fine, the degeneration of character and discord with God and righteousness,—these fires are far more terrifying and real, far more awful than any fire ever kindled in the imagination of the fathers. An outraged conscience is itself an awful punishment. “In a secret chest, under lock and key, Hawthorne’s Dimmesdale hid a bloody scourge with which he plied his shoulders. Fasting by day, he kept long vigils by night until his brain reeled and his strength failed. In one of those semi-conscious hours he saw demons beckoning to him to join their company. Once, when an angel band approached as if for convoy, the celestial beings started back in horror and fled, for they recognized his guilty secret. Saddest of all, the ghost of his revered mother approached, only to pass by without casting a single pitying look behind.”

Reaping the reward of his monstrous sins, George Eliot’s Tito felt as if a “serpent began to coil about his limbs.”

Rational, scientific, and moral grounds reinforce the divine promises that righteousness will secure eternal reward, and the warning of Jesus that sin will eventually entail a moral accounting by the great Judge.

1. The moral law, that whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap, operates in all worlds. Figs

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do not grow of thistles, nor wheat of plantain; grapes do not spring from thorns. Neither can a man sow wicked deeds and reap happiness, nor ungodliness and reap heaven. Let a man plant the seeds of degeneracy, immorality, and spiritual neglect in his character, and he can but reap moral and spiritual death. Let him sow faith, holy living, and a Christ-like spirit, and the harvest will be everlasting bliss and peace.

Retribution will as surely follow sin in this world or another as the night the day. Divine compensation must repay all tears and sacrifice in Christ's name. The fruition may be delayed, but it will surely come. The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small. Nor will men object or complain. It will be just. The guilty will, like the man without the wedding garment, be speechless. There is nothing to be said when the great Judge, who knows all, remembers all, tries all, and loves all, speaks. Many who hold guilty secrets will in the last great day gladly give them up and await their fate. Hawthorne, drawing a lesson from Dimmesdale's tragedy, declares "that in the last great judgment day every heart that holds a miserable secret will yield it up, not with reluctance, but with joy unutterable." Many a guilty man, by his own confession, was anxious to

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be discovered, and goes with a light heart to meet his deserved and waiting punishment.

2. The law of crystallization of character, leading to its final fixity, indicates an eternal moral separation of men. Character up to a given point is plastic and changeable. By and by it becomes fixed and immutable. Until that fixity occurs, the direction the soul is moving is the determining factor. Slipping downward, the soul has a millstone about it; struggling upward, it has heavenly wings. The way a soul faces is more important than the position in the moral scale it occupies. For a degenerate character no more awful hell could be imagined than just being compelled to live with itself. The projection of character beyond the grave is the only reasonable expectation in a bi-world moral universe ruled by God. All characters are not equally sinful or equally righteous in this world or the next, but the trend of character will determine final destiny. Even God Almighty can not override the freedom of a man's moral choices.

3. Any ethical view of God's love and justice demands that the righteous shall be rewarded and the wicked punished. If there is no distinction in final destiny between right and wrong, it involves an indictment of the moral integrity of the universe. That there are earthly inequalities which

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must await future adjudication, is admitted by all familiar with life. Some injustices ought to be righted here and now. No one can blame men for discontent with the avoidable conditions that lift high the sinner and cast down the saint. Some inequalities will be adjusted as time rolls on; but others can never be, in this world. The saints are martyred, and the wicked flourish like a great bay tree. It must ever be so. But He that sitteth in the circle of the heavens shall laugh at them. He seeth that their time is coming. They must give an account of the deeds done in the body. Sin leads logically to separation from the good. A sinful being would not be happy in heaven even if thrust in by force. Cramming heaven into a man's black heart and pushing a guilty wretch into heaven are equally impossible.

But what of *eternal* punishment? Few will deny that sin will entail punishment, but some question the justice or probability of its eternal duration.

There are several modes of dealing with this dilemma:

1. Universalism is a winsome and optimistic hope that does credit to the heart of every man who holds it. He who believes it must have unspeakable comfort in proclaiming it. To think of any other

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possibility fills our own heart with sorrow. Certain of the great poets have given this "larger hope" finest expression. Sings one:

"O yet we trust, . . .
That not one life shall be destroyed
Or cast as rubbish to the void
When God hath made the pile complete."

But there are three decisive reasons against it. (1) Jesus' teaching and the whole trend of the New Testament (with the exception of several debatable passages) unmistakably point to an irremediable doom awaiting the finally impenitent. Jesus' words are unmistakable. He who holds the "larger hope" must take flat issue with His words or else deny their authenticity. (2) God Himself can not compel a free agent to choose righteousness and holiness against his will. (3) It is the witness of revelation and the observation of human nature that there is a point where character becomes fixed and unchangeable, and that men may obstinately choose the evil and deliberately spurn proffered pardon and righteousness. I wish I could believe in the "larger hope," but loyalty to the truth will not allow me.

2. Punishment, endless in duration, has been longest held by theologians as consonant with revelation and reason. Let it be remembered that, as

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long as sin abides, hell endures, anyway. No divine wizardry could put sin in heaven or heaven in sin. Eternal separation, deprivation, remorse, and retribution are but the logical and natural results of a sinful character. As long as sinful character abides, its retribution must necessarily endure. If that endures forever, its punishment will. There is an unpardonable sin, whatever it may be. Some see in the abode of the lost a kind of asylum, a mad-house provided by Omnipotent Love (nothing so well defines sin as madness). This is provided by Infinite Love so that the madness of its inmates will not work further havoc on themselves or the universe. It also provides protection from contamination and discord for those who dwell among the blessed.

The idea of punishment involves, practically, a variety of method, varying according to time and place and nature of the delinquency, viz.: separation, deprivation, pain, remorseful memory, and destruction. Some men, for crimes committed, are, by the operation of our present laws, cast into prison, some are deprived of certain rights of citizenship, some separated from the fellowship of their associates, some are executed outright. Possibly all of these modes of punishment, transferred to the moral plane, may be involved in the future

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punishment of the wicked. The disuse or abuse of moral or spiritual faculties atrophies them. By and by continual atrophy of all moral faculties leads to spiritual death.

3. A third new theory has latterly been championed by many devout and thoughtful men, viz.: conditional immortality and annihilation of the finally impenitent. They declare that the Scriptures do not teach unconditional immortality, quite the contrary, in fact; that the figure of fire used therein, as the instrument of punishment is, as customarily, a figure denoting consumption rather than pain; that all men are capable of survival in their spiritual nature, but not all will survive. Men who do not possess the sanctifying, renewing, immortal, spiritual life must perish at death or at some other time. Immortality is the special gift of those who are united to Christ by faith. Those who lack this, at last simply cease to be. Neither the Scriptures nor Jesus' own words forbid this view. A permissible interpretation of eternal is not infinite duration of time, but "irrepealable doom;" of fire, is that it will consume rather than cause endless suffering. Punishment is eternal; that is, there is no repeal from it, as when a soul, unfit to companion with God, ceases to be. It is the survival of the spiritually fit. A soul dwells with

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God and is in heaven because it is fit to be. The unfit simply have the breath of spiritual life withdrawn. This view seems to be gaining ground among American thinkers. It leaves no suspicion of an eternal discord in the moral universe when "He shall subdue all things Himself." Even some who hold the former views of the final doom of the wicked see little objection to this. "If, however," says Dr. Charles A. Dickinson, "a man should tell me that in the far-off æons of eternity the vast asylum of the lost shall be depopulated, because the madness of sin has spent itself and its victims have dropped away into eternal unconsciousness, which is 'the blackness of death' and the 'second death,' I should be more willing to agree with him, for I am more and more convinced that the final end of sin is death, and that life and immortality are the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

But whatever may be the final state of the wicked and the just, we may be certain of two things: (1) The final judgment of the great Judge will be absolutely just. It will give every one the fullest opportunity to attain the ideal of his creation as conceived and desired by God. No doubt God will so order circumstances, will so reveal Himself, will so direct the persuasion of the Spirit as

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to bring every man to holiness and heaven if it can be done without crushing his freedom. No human being will be given over to suffer endless loss or pain while God can see a possibility of his salvation.

(2) Now is the accepted time of choosing, now is the day of salvation. There is danger and death in delay. We may not boast of to-morrow. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." An acceptance of Christ as the only Savior of men, and faith in Him as Master, must be no formal matter! It must be vital. It must lead to the transformation of character and the regulation of conduct in accordance with Christ's glorious mastery. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." Dying, the great Moody said: "Earth recedes; heaven opens before me. It is no dream. It is beautiful. It is like a trance. If this is death, it is sweet. There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go."

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"Christ is the Head of the Church and He is the Savior of the body."—*Ephesians 5: 23.*

"No one can command or ought to command the soul except God, who alone can show it the way to heaven. It is futile and impossible to command, or by force to compel, any man's belief. Heresy is a spiritual thing, which no iron can hew down, no fire burn, no water drown. . . . Whenever the temporal power presumes to legislate for the soul, it encroaches."—*Luther.*

"Like every good teacher, authority should labor to render itself useless."—*Sabatier.*

"There has always been a struggle between the true Christian spirit and that ponderous inheritance of the past which, however, has never been quite able to overpower it. It has at last triumphantly shaken off the incubus, and to it the future is promised. But now it is like the captive bird which sees its cage falling to pieces around it. It has long been imprisoned, but now it is singing over the fragments, conscious of its wings and its liberty to use them."—*Sabatier.*

"The Church threatens the world with the Presbyterian finger, and the Methodist finger, and with the Congregational finger, and with the Baptist finger, and with the Episcopalian thumb, and the devil is not hurt. We need to have the hand doubled up into a solid fist, and then the evil about us will feel it."—*Anon.*

"I desire a league offensive and defensive with every soldier of Jesus Christ."—*John Wesley.*

VI

IS PROTESTANTISM PASSING?

PROTESTANTISM has a twofold significance: first, that combination of denominations which were arrayed in historical protest against the Church of Rome; second, that complex of forces, both constructive and destructive, which was awakened in the intellectual, moral, and religious revolution of the Reformation, and still abides, albeit in modified and higher form. The former is institutional, various in form and expression, changing from time to time; the latter is vital and imperishable, because it has won the emancipation of the human spirit, from which it can never revert to the slavery of the past. Some Protestant denominations may die, perchance with good reason, while Protestantism moves triumphantly forward. Too, the divided and disintegrated fashion of historical Protestantism may be externally fused into a more compact body by federation or union, without essentially modifying its

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constructive program or surrendering the vital spiritual conquests it has forever won for the human race.

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Discussions of the weaknesses of both Catholicism and Protestantism, as well as the well-known facts of the large influx of Catholic communicants into America through the gates of immigration; the growing spirit of fraternity and co-operation among Protestant Churches; the not infrequent coalitions or overtures of union, presaging the realization of the dream of a union of all Protestantism, in spirit and form, if not in uniformity of worship and creed; the rise of Modernism in the very bosom of the Church of Rome,—have combined to awaken extraordinary interest in the question, “Is Protestantism passing?”

To answer this inquiry we would go deeper than the statistical tables, though they are sufficiently illuminating. Last year (1909) Protestantism made a net gain in communicants of nearly half a million (480,991), as compared with a Roman Catholic gain of 227,000, notwithstanding the fact that the immense tide of immigration (averaging nearly a million a year for a decade) has swept in from countries where Romanism is predominant. This

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scarcely justifies a cry of alarm. America has wonderful powers of assimilation and transformation. Like a huge mint it swallows this human bullion, only to change it into coin of gold, with the stamp of Americanism upon it. Its capacity has in the past been severely tested, but it has never yet failed. Every one of the 150 Protestant denominations, with the exception of seven, show an increase of membership aggregating a very substantial gain as a whole. Inspecting those few which chronicle a decrease, some obvious causes suffice to explain it. (1) Disillusionment, due to the return of common sense to the adherents. (2) The failure to keep abreast of the times either in doctrines or customs. (3) An over-emphasis of non-essentials. (4) A discounting of the fundamentals of Christianity. There is no cause for panic, therefore, in a consideration of the statistical tables.

But, perhaps, some one rightly observes that this is a transitional period; that old creeds and outgrown conceptions of truth, like moth-eaten garments, have lost their acceptability; that an archaic and scholastic theology is being tried in the fires of reason and service, only to be found wanting; that Modernism, within both the Church of Rome and the Church of the Reformers, is rising in our skies, and one is unable as yet to discover whether

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it be a star of hope and promise, or a cloud of storm and stress.

“New occasions teach new duties;
Time makes ancient good uncouth.
They must upward still and onward,
Who would keep abreast of truth.”

Right!

But every age is transitional. It was as true of Augustine's day and Luther's and Wesley's as ours. There never was a generation when, through the growth of knowledge and the expansion of the Christian spirit, the truth so jealously guarded in moldy parchments was not passing away. A certain Modernism was as characteristic of John Huss and Savonarola as it is of Father Tyrell or Abbe Loisy or the priests who in the utmost boldness declared to the Vatican their brave hopes in “What We Want.” That Protestantism is just now undergoing a transition characteristic of our age, does not excite astonishment. If it were dead, it would not change. Our only concern should be that its transformation be in the direction of purification and perfection. Is it passing, let it be on to greater glory.

The grand achievements of Protestantism, the spiritual liberation of the individual man, the abolition of a mode of salvation based on empty works

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instead of a living faith, the acknowledgment of the right to worship God according to the dictates of one's own conscience,—will never be lost, whatever external forms, institutions, or unities may evolve in the future. Never again can the Bible become a book closed to the masses; never again will a religious excrescence or human invention be allowed to obscure the fair face of Christ and the cross; never again will the intolerance of former times, of which we have observed a recrudescence in the recent affront given by the Vatican in Rome to two of the most highly honored representative Americans, be tolerated with complacency by broad-minded men, whether Protestant or Catholic. The emancipated do not willingly reassume the collars and chains of a former serfdom. The spirit of religious liberty begotten in the Reformation is deathless. But Protestantism will not be the last to bury the bloody shirt, nor the first to exhibit that temper of intolerance which they so much deplore. But, where freedom of thought is asserted, every man's opinions must be dispassionately examined in the crucible of reason and tried in the test-tube of experience whether they be true. They must stand, not by the compulsion of faith, nor the dictation of an infallible earthly authority, but by their inherent worth and reasonableness. But lib-

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erty is not license. Intellectual freedom is not intellectual anarchy. To abolish all authority, even that of God Himself, is the deathblow of truth and righteousness. The battle of religious liberty has been fought and won. The next great lesson for our generation to learn is that of wisdom and self-control. This each man must learn for himself, either under the kind hand of faith or the stern ferule of necessity. Some men never succeed in the attempt. But it is to be remembered that at best the process is perilous, and perchance painful.

II. NEO-PROTESTANTISM.

Our day is witnessing the rise of a Neo-Protestantism within the bounds of the Roman Church itself — “Modernism,” so-called. Even if one feared the decline of Protestantism in its historical form, he could not fail to observe that the Vatican is being stirred as it has not been in a long time, by the rise of this diverse but critical school of independent thinkers within its own fold. Unlike Luther, they refuse to withdraw from the Church or be made apostates, “hoping to purify the Church from within.” The Vatican does not quite know what to do with Modernism, which it regards as the “synthesis of all heresies.” She has begun by chopping off a few ecclesiastical heads and in-

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terdicting some books. For the sake of outward peace the ecclesiastical sinners have "yielded to external authority only that they may in time compel it to become subject to reason." They have by the Pope's request given up mortar-board and frock, but they continue to think, to write and to print books, and even present their claims to Pope Pius himself in an appeal entitled, "What We Want." The Pope strikes hard at Modernism and, let us allow, may succeed in repressing it for the time by Syllabus and Encyclical, in which innumerable errors are pointed out, the process reminding one of the Spaniard Stunica, who professed to find sixty thousand heresies in the writings of Erasmus. Modernists do inveigh against some of the archaic dogmas of the Church. Its real authority, they claim, is not that of an infallible Pope, but "the collective conscience" of the members of the Church, and they intend to remain within the fold to help mold that conscience for the future. They ally themselves with the historical critical scholarship of the times, affirming that the symbolic presentation of the eternal truth is ever changing, ever coming to new expression and interpretation as knowledge grows. Revelation, they assert, is to theology what the stars are to astronomy or flowers to botany. The stars endure forever. They shone for

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Abraham on the field of Mamre, and the Babylonians by the banks of the Euphrates, as they do now for Pickering in America. But modern astronomy is as different from the ancient astrology as day and night. Lilies, too, bloomed the same at the feet of Jesus as they do now on the Judean hills; but the science of botany—namely, our knowledge of flowers—is a modern discipline.

The Modernist's task is a double one, they assert: to deny the Roman Cæsarism, and to affirm true Catholicism. As an indication of the widespread demand for this, they urge the observed decay of faith among Romanists. (This is not an illusion. Bishop Frank M. Bristol reports that in the University of Buenos Ayres, with its thousands of students from the best families of the republic, in a country where Roman Catholicism is dominant, there are not more than ten who have any religion whatsoever.) That multitudes of the people are forsaking the Church (note the adoption of modern evangelistic methods employed by the Paulist Fathers in the missions to stem this movement as well as to convert non-Catholics). "What Italy lacks," says Don Romolo Murri, a Modernist, "is moral energy. A bad stench, as of something decayed, oozes from all the pores of her political life. The cause of it lies in the lack of real religion.

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The principal cause of it belongs to those priests who represent reaction." Almost thou persuadest us to be Modernists, Don Romolo!

Mark you, we do not here discuss the merits or demerits of Modernism. It represents, however, a trend within Rome itself which is nothing short of Protestant in spirit. Its adherents comprise all schools of thought, from conservative to ultra-radical. Some of the Modernists outprotest Protestantism. Doubtless the Vatican is right in declaring that the criticisms of some shake not merely the foundations of the Church, but the fundamentals of Christianity. We certainly agree with the Pope in condemning the ultra-radical Modernist who separates the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith, leaving the former in foggy uncertainty and the latter in ideal glorification. But our present purpose is merely to indicate that a new Protestantism has arisen within Romanism; reason—the flaming spirit of Protestantism is unquenchable. Its day is not done. The mission of Protestantism is not yet fulfilled so that it can die. Not only must it stand for the spiritual emancipation of man everywhere on this round globe, but, having achieved that by missionary and evangelizing conquest, it must solve the great problems of the application of the principles of Christian ethics to

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modern industrial, economic, and social life, and meet the social crisis upon us in the spirit and mind of the Master. Our task is by no means accomplished.

III. THE NEXT STEP.

But not a few fix their gaze upon the weaknesses and failures of Protestantism as a sign of its passing. Newman Smyth points them out in his able and brilliant fashion. Many of the faults cited, however, are characteristic of both Romanism and Protestantism, and not a few reside in Catholicism alone. The list can be made more or less extensive, according to one's temper and insight into the passing pageant of current religious forces and tendencies. It is charged that there is a decay of authority in family and Church life, a lack of thorough and adequate religious education, an all too prevalent separation of religion and life, an escape of social and political factors from the direct influences of the Church as Churches; a too frequent loss of moral leadership, leading negatively to the encouragement of socialism. "A populace vehement for social justice and weary of charity imagines it sees in the Churches a religion which has come down from the cross to save itself, and hence is powerless to save others."

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But the most serious indictment against present-day Protestantism is its endless divisions into denominations and sects. Many of these are founded upon non-essentials, upon divergences of mental temper or spiritual disposition, or upon some historical controversy that has now lost all religious significance. It is really a great scandal that there should be 150 different Protestant denominations in the United States, including nineteen bodies of Methodists, fifteen of Baptists, twenty-four of Lutherans, and twelve of Presbyterian. Who can seriously defend so great a division of forces and forms as needed to promote the cause of Christianity? Undoubtedly there was historical explanation, if not justification, for most of them. Friendly rivalry, too, promotes progress. Divergences of temperament, liturgy, orders, mode of Church government and of doctrine and discipline are thus provided for. A forced uniformity in these particulars would lead to a new disruption. But both laymen and ministers are dreaming of a day when the number of denominations shall be diminished, when those that remain shall be welded more closely together in spirit, in fraternal relations, and federated co-operation.

The divergences among the evangelical Churches have been largely based on over-emphasis of non-

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essentials or upon matters of secondary importance. They ought never to surrender the faith which they believe to be the essence of historical Christianity; but is it of first or divisive importance that one Church should sprinkle with much water and another with little? whether one prays printed prayers or extemporizes? whether ministers be dressed in gown or broadcloth? whether worship be on the first day or the seventh? whether one forbids questionable amusements or puts that on the enlightened Christian conscience? whether one be converted at an altar or decides that great matter at his home? whether ministers are appointed by cabinet or committee? These are relatively non-essential.

But it does matter tremendously what one's attitude is toward the Lord Jesus Christ. This is absolutely essential. Unless there be love and loyalty and faith in Him, there can be no real unity, however uniform the externals may be. This is the one great focal point around which the forces of evangelical Protestantism may rally. He is the Lodestone of the ages, drawing all hearts that love Him into fraternal unity. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me," were Jesus' own words. Men have been lifting up other things, and Christianity has lost its power and glory. "We

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have come to see," says Dr. Borden P. Bowne, "that if we will not listen to Jesus Christ in His revelation of the Father, it is not worth while to listen to any one else. He is the only one who has brought a gospel worth hearing and, we may be sure, the only one who has brought a gospel that can move the hearts of men. It stands fast as the plainest indication and demonstration of long experience that it is only the gospel of the Son of God that will long move the hearts and sway the minds of men."

Prof. James Denny proposes this simple creed as an absolute essential to the unity of Christendom: "I believe in God, through Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord and Savior." This confession implies two things at least: (1) "That the Person concerned is to God what no other can be; and (2) That He is also what no other can be to man. The first expresses the unique allegiance and loyalty which all Christians acknowledge to Christ; the second, the unique debt which they owe to Him." It does not break with the past as do some with "a new theology with its critical knowledge and its airy intolerance." It does not bind men to a dead body of non-essentials that forever divide and separate. The attitude of this uniting confession is that already held by the vast majority of

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evangelical Churches. It is, moreover, the historical attitude of the New Testament. "They acknowledge that in their spiritual life it is His to determine everything, and that they are infinitely and forever His debtors." With this fundamental conception lacking, the Christianity of the New Testament loses its religious unity. It is absolutely essential to its life and perpetuity. Without it Protestantism as well as Roman Catholicism would be an empty form, sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals. Both would die, and there would be few to mourn. This much of a confession at least, with all it implies, we must insist on as a basis of future reunion of divided Protestantism, Greek and Roman Catholicism that may some day take place, when all alike shall put less stress on outgrown dogmas and non-essentials.

The intolerance of the Vatican, its assumption of infallible authority, its claims of temporal power, the arrogation of divine functions of forgiveness, its infallible errors of holding the keys of heaven and hell in their hands, the attempts to dam the stream of thought and religious freedom with threats of excommunication,—must pass away before that day dawns. Protestantism, too, will have her sins to confess in sackcloth and ashes; but our dreams and visions look forward to a glorious

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consummation of time's travail, when the kingdoms of this world shall in truth become the Kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ, when a reunited Christendom shall bow the knee before Him and every tongue confess Him Lord of lords and King of kings.

“ All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of all.”

Is the Church Losing Its Grip?

"For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth into the other part under heaven; so shall the Son of man be in His day."—*Luke 17: 24.*

"If I were a committee of one to report on the condition of the world to-day, I think I should report progress. The world is getting ahead. It may not seem so when we look around, but when we look back and take a historic survey, we can see that we have come a long way, . . . God's world and man's world mix in very wonderful ways, and we are a part of both. We receive the commission to further this world and help it on toward the divine consummation."—*Borden P. Bowne.*

"Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
And not on paper leaves or leaves of stone;
Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,
Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan.
While swings the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,
While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
Still at the prophets' feet the nations sit."
—*Lowell.*

"Before the monstrous wrong he sets him down,—
One man against a stone-walled city of sin,
For centuries those walls have been abuilding— . . .
But by and by earth shakes herself impatient,
And down in one great roar of ruin
Crash watchtower and citadel and battlements,
After the red dust has cleared away, the lonely soldier
Stands with strange thoughts beneath the friendly stars."
—*The Reformer by Sill.*

VII

IS THE CHURCH LOSING ITS GRIP?

WE are incorrigibly optimistic. We trust this does not hinder our seeing things in proper perspective, but are certain it will prevent our losing heart. We shall, however, endeavor to divest ourselves of such prejudices as would pervert our vision, even though the fact that our sympathies lie against the pessimist may not be in slightest doubt.

We find ourselves in a mood of apology for using the interrogatory form for the title of our discussion. It is so readily misunderstood by the shallow and superficial. An affirmative reply is so glibly made by the cynic. Not difficult is it to paint the past in color of rose, because one has forgotten, and the present in lamp-black, because one has lost heart. Every evil tendency observed about him by the melancholic pessimist throws him into a panic, like a cry of "fire." The cheapest sort of superficial logic employed by one who lacks historical perspective or vital faith is the indiscriminate charge that the world is retrograding, that the Church needs but to lift up its eyes to behold the

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handwriting of its doom on the walls of time, that the faithful would do well to prepare to lifeboats, as the old hulk is about to break up. We are reminded of that forlorn soul who discovered that

“The sun’s heat will give out in ten million years more,—

And he worried about it.

It will surely give out, so the scientists said

In all scientific books he had read,

And the whole boundless universe then will be dead—

And he worried about it.”

But the deeper insight is that our world is rolling more and more into the light. Progress, though slow, is being made. We live in the grandest day yet vouchsafed unto man.

“I find the earth not green, but rosy,

Heaven not gray, but fair of hue,

Do I stoop? I pluck a posy,

Do I stand and stare? All’s blue.”

Let us look into this a little.

I. CHURCH AND KINGDOM.

The Church as the organized body of Christian believers, regardless of creed or denomination, differs from the invisible Kingdom of God, which includes every soul that trusts Him. “Other sheep I have,” said Jesus, “which are not of this fold.” Kingdom is a wider word than Church. It is conceivable, therefore, that the Church, as such, might

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be losing ground, when the Kingdom was progressing. A variety of causes might contribute to this contrariety. Nevertheless, as time rolls on and the Church purifies herself and prepares for the coming of the Bridegroom, the two will coalesce.

The Church, however, must never be conceived as confined to individuals or its own particular organism. Its power and influence permeate all our modern life: ethical, philanthropic, and industrial; political, intellectual, and æsthetic, as well as religious. The Church, as such, may not presume to regulate the affairs of State nor preserve the spirit and power of democratic institutions. Its vital principles, however, permeate them like heaven, and its righteousness is the hidden secret of their perpetuity and progress.

Nor does the Church exist for its own sake, but for the sake of the people. It is not an end; it is but a means. When it ceases to serve, to bless, to console, to save, to reveal Christ to men, let it die. Let something else that will undertake this task, assume its place. It has no *raison d'être* except that graven on the royal arms, "Ich dien," I serve. Like Christ, it came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. It must be supported and sustained, as an organization, by its constituency, near or far; but when it ceases to do anything but

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make motions or perpetuate hollow forms or preach an empty gospel, let it perish! The world will little care nor long remember. Like a cut flower, with color and fragrance gone, it will wither and die, as it ought to do.

Propounding the question, Is it losing its grip? in no sense implies, therefore, that as a system of slavery or oppression its power of repression or shackles of bondage may be loosening, or that it can be charged, leechlike, with sucking the life-blood of the people, to its own official or hierarchical advantage. An organization that, like Judas, sells its Lord for thirty pieces of silver, more or less, ought to expect no more happy ending for its simony.

II. IS THE CHURCH LOSING ITS GRIP?

Let us take a glance at statistics. Discussions of this question frequently overlook two important items: (1) the distinction that should be made between the situation in Protestant and Roman Catholic countries, and (2) the local variations in a given country due to emigration or immigration, which really signify no change in the total number of communicants. The increase of Roman Catholics in Germany in recent years is largely to be accounted for by the immigration thereto of Poles,

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Italians, and Catholic Swiss; while a large share of Roman Catholic increase in America in the last decade is accountable by reason of the average immigration of nearly 800,000 annually during that time, predominantly from Southern Europe—Catholic countries. Undoubtedly, too, the presence of an aggressive Protestantism in any country is both a check and an inspiration to Romanism itself.

It is undeniable, as Modernists affirm, that in countries like Italy, France, Spain, and the South American States thousands of men have lost all faith and vital connection with Catholicism and even the essentially Christian ideas beneath its encrusted and outgrown dogmas, its unprogressiveness and intellectual repression, its superstitions and intolerance, and have drifted into indifference and skepticism. This everywhere furnishes a harvest field for a sane, progressive, and tolerant Protestantism. While the faith of hundreds is decaying, a large number are being born anew in the vital atmosphere and unobscured gospel of Jesus Christ. Unless the reactionary tendencies within the Roman Churches are converted, the resulting disintegration is bound to continue.

Protestantism seems everywhere to be progressing except in one country, viz., Germany. In the United States last year the Protestant rate of in-

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crease was 2.2 per cent, as compared with 1.8 per cent increase in population and 1.8 per cent increase in Roman Catholicism. Thus the rate of Protestant increase during 1909 was greater than the growth in population and the rate in the Catholic Church. Moreover, the total seating capacity of Church edifices increased in sixteen years (1890-1906) by 14,976,767 (or 34.4 per cent), totaling 58,536,830.

The growth in seating capacity for the churches has kept pace with the growth in population, being 33.6 per cent for Protestants and 33.3 for Catholics. When it is remembered that the seating capacity of the churches in the United States is over two-thirds of the entire population, and for the Protestants over three times the average membership per Church, and that an average of eight churches a day are being built annually, some of the pessimistic jeremiads concerning the modern decrease in Church interest and attendance lose their terror.

On the other hand, the latest statistics from Germany show a very disheartening loss of ground among all Churches. Though for some thirty years one thousand to two thousand annually broke away from the State Churches in Prussia, in 1904, 1905, and 1906 a sudden jump was noticed (8,802 in 1904, 9,158 in 1905, and 12,007 in 1906). During

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the last three years 17,000 working people in Berlin alone have been affected by the away-from-the-Church agitation. Five extra clerks had to be engaged in the *Cultus Ministerium* to attend to the new business of dismissing those who were breaking away. Socialism, economic conditions, destructive criticism of the Word, have been laying their axes at the foundation pillars of the Churches. And yet it is noteworthy that only 4,270 in Germany register themselves as free-thinkers, without religion, a thing remarkable in the land of Strauss, Lasalle, Engel, Krautsky, and Nietzsche. Says Professor Rauschenbusch concerning the situation in Germany: "For a long time the German State Church took no sympathetic interest in the Socialist movement. It preached loyalty to the King, the divine necessity of social classes, submission, and godly patience. A Socialist was a heathen and a publican. It was generally denied that a man could be both a Socialist and a Christian. The Socialists in their propaganda constantly encountered the Church as a spiritual and social force defending the existing social order, a bulwark of privilege and conservatism. They could gain a man for Socialism only by undermining the authority of the Church over his mind." (Page 321, in "Christianity and Social Crisis.")

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On the other hand, such erratic and destructive German critics as Jensen, Pfleiderer, and Zimmern, outdoing Strauss, who seriously set themselves to the task of proving Christ a myth, has had its effect in undermining the faith of the people, resulting in their loss of religion and in a great falling away from the Church.

III. THREATENING TENDENCIES AND PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE CHURCH OF TO-DAY.

1. Deeper than the more superficial indications of the statistical table lie both the perils and the hope of the Church.

It is not without a show of truth that serious-minded students of the Zeitgeist and the tendencies in the Church discern certain threatening conditions abroad. It is charged that there is a decay of authority both in family and Church life; that there is at present a lack of proper religious education even among those who pretend to give it; that there is an all-too-prevalent separation of religion and life, of Christian principles and commercial ideas, of the Golden Rule and economic laws; that social and political factors have escaped from the direct influence of the Church as a Church; that it has lost its moral leadership and begun the exploitation of bizarre and naturalistic

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notions substituted for the eternal gospel; that the pulpit has ceased to make the saving of men from sin and error its greatest work, but is concerned more in setting afloat trial balloons of "new theologies," so called, which in some respects are neither new nor properly Christian theology at all. All of these indictments deserve the serious attention of the Church. They constitute both its problem and its peril. It may be that sackcloth and ashes, leading to works meet for repentance, will be needed to front the situation aright. But do not be thrown into a panic, nor unduly alarmed. "No religion gains by lapse of time; it only loses. Unless new storms pass over it and cleanse it, it will be stifled in its own dry foliage." These struggles may be blessings in disguise. Only the craven fears to front them. Mechanical and magical authority is dying. The presumption of temporal authority of an infallible Pope is tottering. But spiritual authority, derived from God, checked and guided in the individual conscience by the Scriptures and the "Collective Conscience," is just coming to its own, taking deep and vital root in modern religious life. Religion, if less punctilious as to form, as to passion is far more powerful and respectable than it once was. Religious education is taking on a profounder meaning and a wider

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scope than ever before. If the Church seems superficially to have lost moral leadership or the control of social and political forces, it is partly in the seeming. Direct control is now as ever subject to grave dangers and abuses. As a Church it no longer arrogates certain original functions of the individual, of the State, or of the social organism, which are yet by it shuttled through and through; morally weighed, regulated, and controlled by the principles of Christianity.

Abortive stampedes in theology are as common these days as the fire-alarm. Don't be frightened. Some thinker has just knocked over his kerosene lamp; that's all. He has made a smudge, but has no light. Those who are thrown into a panic by it, lack historical perspective. In the last generation religion for a time was hardly respectable in intellectual circles. Materialism, agnosticism, and atheism, following the exploitation of the new and undigested theory of evolution, occupied the limelight and had Christianity on the run. But, says Dr. Bowne, "That has all passed away. Religion is again intellectually respectable. No one thinks of it now as a mere sublimation of animalism. The way of rational faith was never so open as it is to-day. I think quite a number of questions, such as those of atheism and materialism,

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have been fought to a finish, definitely settled, never to be taken up again unless there be a return to intellectual barbarism. We know the worst that can be said." As for "new theologies," any one these days who has some airy vagary to exploit puts that label on it and rushes into print. Such attempts have been made before. Concerning Comte's "religion of humanity" "it is impossible to speak with gravity." Mr. Spencer gave the world his "religion of the unknowable" without altars, shrines, inspiration, or stimulus to right living. But it is dead. So will these smoking torches die away, leaving not even a smudge behind. The faith of some may be shaken in the conflict, but it will be steadied again, and God will make even the doubts of men, if honest, to praise Him.

2. The Social Crisis is undoubtedly the most serious problem confronting the Church. It threatens its perpetuity if not solved, but offers a magnificent opportunity if grappled with.

The working classes, if they do not name the threatening tendencies already noted, declare sometimes they believe that the Church has lost vital interest in the common people and their welfare; that the Church ought to represent the Christ-spirit on the earth in social and economic relations. The future is either to behold a social Christianity come

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to fullness and flower, or else a deluge. They declare that the unequal conditions of our modern life, the high cost of living preventing the wage earners from properly supporting their Church as both pride and loyalty demand, the growth side by side of the immensely rich and the abjectly poor—the first but little concerned with Christianity, the second compelled to wretchedness and sin by its poverty—is bound to take away the sinews of war in men and money from the Church until its ability to minister to the highest welfare of humanity will be greatly impaired, if not paralyzed. There are signs of social unrest among the masses, mingled discontent and bitterness. Some think they behold in the average Church member the conservative bulwark of a social order which is essentially un-Christian. Paradoxically they begin to laud Christ, but curse the Church, or at least pass it by with indifference and scorn. They declare that they can not afford Church-life, and their indifference is more the result of poverty than unbelief. It is no plea for the “hobo” they make. “Hoboes,” whether rich or poor, are alike parasites on society, sucking its lifeblood. Frequently they behold employers, in whose Christianity, as applied to every-day industrial life they have no confidence, separating religion and business, occu-

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pying the chief places in the synagogues, and they scorn to make application to be seated even in the "lowest room." Or the demands upon their physical and nervous forces are so great in these modern times that they have no spirit or strength left for Church work or Christian service. They perceive instinctively that commercial ethics and Christian ethics are hostile, the one to the other, and, like two antagonistic spirits, are grappling for the mastery; that questions of personal morality and virtue are bound up with the sinister influences of our modern industrial life, and that the Church must master them or be mastered by them. The bitterest are even led at times by their wrongs, fancied and real, to doubt the fundamental goodness of the universe and its God.

Too often the proletariat has found distinct and definite antagonism within the Church to their most precious and unselfishly idealistic dreams, and have turned away chilled and wounded, and broken in spirit. As a logical result of this, many of these men, with their human souls full of guilt and "longings for holiness and the deathless life," get out of touch with Christ and the Church, and though they may labor for social regeneration, themselves lack forever the glory and peace of individual regeneration. "There are two great entities

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in human life" says Rauschenbusch, "the human soul and the human race—religion is to save both. The soul is to seek righteousness and eternal life. The race is to seek righteousness and the Kingdom of God." (Page 367.) "It has always been recognized that the creation of regenerate personalities pledged to righteousness is one of the most important services which the Church can render to social progress. But regeneration merely creates the will to do right; it does not define for man what is right." (Page 354.) "It is doubtless true that the interest in the social question is apt to overshadow the other aspects of religion. Absorbed in public questions such men forget to appeal to the individual soul for repentance and to comfort those in sorrow. That is a sore defect. The human soul with its guilt and its longing for holiness and the deathless life is a permanent fact in religion, and no social perfection will quench its hunger for the living God." (Page 366.)

All of this and more constitutes the present social crisis confronting the world and the Church. It must be met, not by bitterness and invective, class hatred or scorn. We stand on the threshold of a social revolution, that will come, not with violence, let us hope, but with steady evolution and with the certainty that Christ's right and

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power to reign will be demonstrated. All of the claims and demands of the working-classes are neither rational nor desirable. The great yearnings and instinctive appeals to Christ and to men, that call themselves Christians, are divine in their origin. Christian business men will one day cease, perhaps, to make a fetich of our present wage system. Modifications in the social organism are bound to come, are even now being made. Some day a Christian Cooperative Commonwealth may not be a fatuous dream, but the logical sequence of the evolution of present-day Christianity.

What is needed in the pulpit to-day is the prophet's vision, the prophet's daring, the prophet's voice. If those who are so busy making "new theologies" and shying casters at the faith would only come up and begin to recast Christian theology in its social aspects, their other frequent sins might be overlooked. Brilliant powers and abilities, to say nothing of magnificent opportunities, are wasted in the vain and thankless task of "blasting at the Rock of Ages." "If the Church tries to confine itself to theology and the Bible and refuses the larger mission to humanity, its theology will gradually become mythology and its Bible a closed Book."¹

¹ Rauschenbusch.

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O, for one day of Elijah and Isaiah and John the Baptist! Imagine Jesus declaring that men are to be weighed, rather than counted, when it comes to the kingdom of the Church. A new prophetism is more needed than a new religion or a new theology. History has been and is still giving its unreversed verdicts on all such attempts. Let the modern pulpit give us something new and vital, from God, that will save men and society. "There is no creature more fatal than your pedant; safe as he esteems himself, the terrible issues spring from him. Human crimes are many, but the crime of being deaf to God's voice, of being blind to all but parchments and antiquarian rubrics when the divine handwriting is abroad on the sky—certainly there is no crime which the Supreme Powers do more terribly avenge."¹

IV. FOUR GREAT MODERN MOVEMENTS IN THE CHURCH.

Thank God the Church is not wholly unmindful of her problems and opportunities. We are still incorrigible optimists. Four great modern movements in the Church are filled with the glory and flower of youthful hope: (1) A new and more intelligent emphasis, in Church and school alike,

¹ Carlyle.

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upon religious education. Religion is now seen to be one of the greatest factors in life, one of the indispensable elements of culture, and one of the essentials of education of any kind. All life is spanned with the rainbow, and girded beneath by the solid ground of religion. (2) Modern forms of loyal obedience to Christ's last great commands, together with the exhibition of love for Him and humanity, in the great missionary and evangelistic movements of our day. In our day there has come an unprecedented consecration of wealth, culture, time, and men to the cause of Christ. A glorious vision has been born anew of "a world that *can* be evangelized, of a world that shall be evangelized, and of a Christ worthy to become the subject of a world-wide evangel." Men are saying that we are the people to do it. (3) The awakening of the social conscience of the Church. This is coming slowly but surely. Some prophets of the vision have lifted up their voices, some may even yet be stoned for their temerity. It is not an easy thing to say to modern men who are really sinning against the Golden Rule, as Nathan did to David, "Thou art the man." But only a craven of a prophet will smother his message. It will be difficult for men to alter the habits of a lifetime, to give up the customs and prejudices of a Christless

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political economy. "Savonarola was a great democrat as well as a religious prophet," says Rauschenbusch. "In his famous interview with the dying Lorenzo Di Medici he made three demands of him, as a condition for granting absolution. Of the man he demanded a living faith in God's mercy. Of the millionaire he demanded restitution of his ill-gotten wealth. Of the political usurper he demanded the restoration of the liberties of the people of Florence. It is significant that the dying sinner found it easy to assent to the first, hard to consent to the second, and impossible to concede the last." (Page 335, Rauschenbusch.) (4) Present-day building of a modern constructive theology, with less emphasis upon non-essentials, but with greater and more constructive emphasis upon the fundamentals of Christianity; with less search for causes of division, and more exhibition of fraternal harmony and unity, at least among the evangelical denominations.

This is the Master's Day! Let us not individually get out of step and tune with the great movements of the immanent Christ among men to-day. This is the Master's Day. And the lightning that lighteneth the one part under heaven is shining unto the other part under heaven. This old world of ours is rolling into light.

What of the Future of Christianity?

"And I saw, and behold a white horse : and he that sat on him had a bow ; and a crown was given unto him : and he went forth conquering and to conquer."—*Rev. 6 : 2.*

"I saw what you women would call a clothes-hamper—a large wicker basket—filled with the bodies of little dead babies which the keeper of the place told me had been gathered up in the drunken hovels of that one town that one day. A clothes-basket of babies, as sweet and as innocent and as deserving as ever were born, lying there with their little shut fists upraised where 'death had frozen them, clutching at love in the darkness—poor little things !—and calling to the Christian nation, Life !—Life !—Life !'"—*John G. Woolley.*

OPPORTUNITY.

"This I beheld, or dreamed it in a dream :
There spread a cloud of dust along a plain.
And underneath the cloud or in it, raged
A furious battle, and men yelled, and swords
Shocked upon swords and shields. A prince's banner
Wavered, then staggered backward, hemmed by foes,
A craven hung along the battle's edge
And thought, 'Had I a sword of keener steel—
That blue blade that the king's son bears—but this
Blunt thing—!' He snapt and flung it from his hand,
And lowering, crept away and left the field,
Then came the king's son, wounded, sore bestead,
And weaponless, and saw the broken sword,
Hilt-buried in the dry and trodden sand,
And ran and snatched it, and with battle shout
Lifted afresh, he hewed his enemy down,
And saved a great cause that heroic day."

—*Sill.*

'Our great business with Christianity is to proceed upon it.'

—*Chalmers.*

"When you walk toward the sun all your shadows are behind you."

—*Anon.*

VIII

“WHAT OF THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY?”

Now a birdseye view of the ground we have traversed, with a look into the future. We are neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but certain signs are blazing in the sky which the way-faring man, though a fool, may read. Will Christianity be superseded as a religion? It is but one step in an evolution of religions? Is it but a little system that will have its day and cease to be, or has it within itself the elements of finality? Is Christianity one of many, or is it *the* religion? Admitting it will change, will it be so modified as to be abandoned for something else, like a derelict at sea, or a locomotive on the junk-heap? Or will its rich and unfolding essence satisfy the ages, while ever fresh interpretations and applications of its eternal truth are brought out? What forms, inner and outer, is it destined to assume? We

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should need far more knowledge than our present limitations permit, to answer some of these interrogations, but the general outlook is not difficult to discern. Let us make a survey of some of our backgrounds and foregrounds, of the retrospects and prospects.

I. THE COMPETITORS OF CHRISTIANITY are partly within and partly without, some facing it abroad and some facing it at home. They are both an opportunity and a problem, at once a stimulus and a peril. Sweeping the eye over the nations, one perceives hoary old world-religions with millions of adherents. Religion always has been and always will be the chief concern of life; for eternal interests outweigh the temporal, and, though the souls of men find the temporal object loved with greater ardor in pursuit than possession, they discover that the eternal object, however high a value they may set upon it in pursuit, is even more soul-satisfying in possession. Hence it is inevitable that Christianity and the world-religions should come into competition in their endeavor to satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart. There was a moment in history when Christianity was dead, as Christ's disciples beheld the crucifixion of its Founder; but on the third day the risen Lord became the Conquering Power of the new and final

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religion which was destined to go forth conquering and to conquer. Arising with a band of eleven humble but baptized disciples, the first Christian Church, born at a time when some of the ethnic religions were tottering under the weight of years, Christianity has now reached the first flush only of its youthful strength, with nearly 500,000,000 adherents, about double that of its nearest competitor, Confucianism (256,000,000), with the other world-religions ranged in descending figures. (The latest competent authority, M. Faurrier de Flaix, gives as these statistics: Hindooism, 190,000,000; Mohammedanism, 176,834,372; Buddhism, 147,900,000; Taoism, 43,000,000; Shintoism, 14,000,000; Judaism, 7,186,000; Polytheism, 17,681,669.)

Christianity is, moreover, filled with spiritual vitality and is gaining ground, while these world-old religions, without exception, lack in these very characteristics. A flaming missionary like Judson or Carey or Livingstone or a Taylor or a Thoburn. a mighty evangelist like a Moody or a Gipsy Smith or a Chapman, are unknown to these hoary old religions. Doubtless they contained a partial revelation of God, for He has not left Himself without witness among any people; but their visions are imperfect, broken lights, obscured with error and mist. None of them contain a world-Savior like

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Jesus Christ. There is a cosmopolitanism about Him that moves and attracts every man who beholds Him in His beauty, without regard to race or religion. These are just the qualities which Confucianism and Gautama, the Buddha, lack. They have proved themselves impotent to produce a type of character approaching the Christian. Nothing can rival the richness and power of the Christian's inner experience, least of all can the mysticism and longing for unconsciousness of the Buddhistic Nirvana do so. With one stroke they fail, in buoyancy of hope, the glory of righteousness, and moral quality; in their conceptions of sin, joy of salvation, peace in God, and hope of immortality, so wondrously interknit with Christian faith. Says Cuthbert Hall: "Great are the burdens weighing down the soul of the East; blinding and suffocating are the webs of illusion and fatalism bound upon it; enthralling is the pride of tradition; dark is the shadow of the ethical obscurity enveloping it." (Page 303, "Universal Elements of Christian Religion.") Yet, when one looks into the eyes of the Orient and sees the soul-hunger, the latent potency for divine communion, and the mighty religious aspirations shining out of the wreckage of these old faiths, instantly the Christians know Christ has the vision of God that

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will satisfy their quenchless yearnings. Christianity has already brought to the East a body of spiritual truth, the Christian ideal of life, and a type of inner experience through the world-Savior, which is, like yeast, beginning to leaven the whole lump. And they acknowledge the need of all this. It is the unconscious witness of humanity to the Cross. Christ is bound to go forth in the East conquering and to conquer. Their central personalities are morally inadequate to deal with perversities of the human heart, conscience, and will. They can not vitalize a soul dead in trespasses and sins. No one they reverence matches the Peerless Christ. “They have no equivalent for His power,” says Hall, “to create the fundamental instincts and motives of the soul, to purge and reorganize the affections, to endue with the power of the Spirit. The older religions are weakening because of moral inadequacy, and in their weakness are becoming corrupt; they are trying to arrest the process of corruption by assimilating the salt of the ethics of Jesus, while He, standing more conspicuously than ever before the eyes of the whole race, the Desire of all nations, the Transformer of social ideals, the Regenerator of motives, the Absolver from sins, is extending His influence and multiplying His triumphs as a Savior of the world.” This

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is the witness of the world to the coming triumph of Christianity. It is manifest destiny.

But there are also competitors at home, both within and without the Church. The greatest thinkers declare that the battle of Christianity with atheism and materialism has been fought to a finish. These antagonists of Christianity are dead, never to be revived again, unless mankind "reverts to intellectual barbarism." There are several other tendencies observable, thrown up like foam by the surf, on the shoreline of the ocean of Christianity. An attempt is discernible in some quarters to substitute a pantheistic nature-worship for the ancient way of Christianity. It is a science which professes no religion but universal law, a kind of non-religious ethics freed from the old pious restrictions of conduct, an attempt to satisfy with the hazy and airy penumbra of culture, the thirst for light, absolving itself from the traditional beliefs. Sometimes its suggestions of personal Gethsemanes rise to the fore, as the tragedy of some human spirit is discovered beneath the otherwise calm exterior. Or perchance another attempts to satisfy his quenchless spiritual needs with social activity, robbed of the dynamic of the Presence of Christ, denuded of ecclesiasticism, to be sure, but also cut off from the saving grace, the burden-bearing, the

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consolation in grief of the Savior of men. An unusual popularity nowadays attaches also to certain “isms” which declare they desire the good of men, and by means of healing suggestions or psychological reactions profess to have the touchstone of health and the secret of eternal youth. While some of them profess to base their tenets on the teachings of Christ and desire only the good of men, so much of error is mingled with their claims that, though they are not declared enemies, they are, nevertheless, competitors of Christianity. Concerning all these it may be said that they would eliminate much that is Christian, substitute something else for the supreme will of God, as well as deny and derogate the Saviorship of Christ. If it be said, “nevertheless Christ is preached,” it must be answered, that is exactly not the case.

Doubtless some of these “isms” have certain elements of truth in them. If so, they will but serve to emphasize the segments of the great circle of Christian truth. But their errors will preclude them from general acceptance. By and by they will go the way of atheism and materialism, and no one will seriously espouse them, unless he has dropped back into spiritual barbarism. “The world, the flesh, and the devil” as antagonists of Christianity will doubtless be with us until the

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millennium, but Jesus saw Satan fall, as lightning, from heaven, and the final end of his reign on the earth is certain as fate. The Christian disciple may base his optimism both on that prediction and also on the evident signs everywhere that this old world is slowly rolling into light. Christ has gone forth conquering and to conquer.

II. THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. Christianity, in the essence of its fundamentals, is timeless and eternal, but as a system of doctrines and as a complex of customs and institutions has been progressing from age to age. The same will doubtless be true of the future as of the past. That conceptions of Christian doctrines or duties are static is an antedated notion. Who holds such a view is behind the times, stranded and imbedded like a fossil on the beach of thought. Both the Old and the New Testament contain the record of God's progressive revelation through the minds and religious experience of His chosen instruments of mediation and inspiration. It is more exact to say that the Bible is a record of such a developing revelation of God, than the statement that every syllable in it is the Word of God. The prophets, one by one, proclaimed to their times a message from the Most High needed by their times. As the progress of social, moral, intellectual, and religious evo-

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lution went on, their voices took on ever higher notes and qualities, their eyes beheld ever loftier visions and prospects.

2. In Jesus Christ the fullness of God's revelation was made. Ever since Christianity has simply been moving toward Him. The cry should be not “Back to Christ,” but “Forward to Christ.” And the expectation of every thoughtful Christian is that the future is to develop a more resplendent Christianity. The future of Christianity will, both in the living of it and the conceiving of it, climb toward Him in moral and religious and doctrinal imitation. Undoubtedly the Orient will contribute some rich world-elements to the complete understanding of the Christ when they behold Him in His beauty and begin to interpret Him to the world. Jesus was an Oriental, nine-tenths of the world are Oriental in their thinking, and this will profoundly affect the Christian conception of the Christ that shall dawn on the minds of men in the radiant future. His spirit will ever be incarnated and reincarnated in the Church of the future; for every man, in his interpretations of the Bible as well as of Christian belief and practice, comes to them with certain presuppositions characteristic of his age and of his own mental and moral history. The unpardonable error of any

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man is to suppose that the little pool of his own mind and apprehension is the whole ocean of Christian truth.

A very little thing, morally or mentally, like a penny held before the eye, obscuring the universe, will shut out the truth. Humility and open-mindedness are the first requisites of the scholar, as presumption and arrogance are their own refutation.

“ Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be ;
They are but broken lights of Thee
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

3. But there is peril and hazard in this freedom of thought and in the changing mental order. Some have lost their way. Like blind guides, they are attempting to lead others equally as blind. Both have fallen into the ditch. The philosophical and historical critics who have been endeavoring to exorcise the scholastic and the metaphysical devils from Christian doctrine, leave the body empty, to become the prey of seven other devils worse than the ones cast out, and the last state of it is worse than the first. Our day has witnessed a reaction from the ponderous scholastical theological terms once used to describe the eternal verities they really obscured. But in that revolt some have

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hastily concluded there was no reality beneath them. In the process of recovering the historical portrait of Jesus they have become really unhistorical. By burning up the rubbish of erroneous traditions they have destroyed the master painting which they intended to bring forth to the world. But the ultra-historical school has produced but a momentary reaction. The Christ-likeness of God was not a thing manufactured by the Church. It was revealed in life and blood, in soul and cross, in character and resurrection, by Christ Himself. The reaction from the metaphysical brought forth an admirable practical discipline as well as some new and undiscovered radiance in Jesus of Nazareth and in God the Father as well; but, pushed to the extremity of complete denial, it loses out the dynamic of the Christian religion. It is not big enough for the human spirit. It whittles down its Christ to a mutilated shadow. “It cuts the wings of the soul, and reduces the scale and measure of its thinking,” says Hall. “It can not meet this craving of the human spirit, which knows but too well those hours when the metaphysical is the only outlet of the pent-up sense of infinity. It can not produce the type of character which has been the glory of every Christian age: character steeped in metaphysical conceptions of God in

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Christ, of Christ in the soul of man, of man absorbed by sacrificial love, transfigured by the regenerating grace of the incarnate God. It can not grapple with the problems of the Christianization of the world in lands where the historical counts little, and where he only has power who bears the message like in the terms of its philosophical equivalents." (Hall, page 145, "Universal Elements of Christianity.") The remolding of Christian doctrine and the recasting of religious thought will revolve around the Christian and will center in the old essentials of the Christian faith. Here one must discern between the false prophet and the true with the eye of Jesus Himself. "The apostles of Christianity are challenged, and its advance hindered, not so much by declared enemies as by one-sided adherents who would indignantly disclaim opposition to its influence." (Rev. Harry Jones, M. A.)

III. IS CHRISTIANITY THE FINAL RELIGION? WHAT ARE ITS UNIVERSAL ELEMENTS? The Christian religion of the future as in the past will be Christo-centric. Attempts to explain away its Founder as a mythical person are both pathetic and amusing. Some men seem as unable to get this fixed idea out of their heads as a paranoiac his mania. The dynamic of the Christian religion

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was originally and is now the Person of Christ. His eloquence, his ethics, his wise sayings, and his benevolence were but accessory to the main Figure. The logical result of this obsession to dislodge Christ from His exalted place is to take the heart out of the gospel. Robbing Christianity of its Savior is to despoil the world of the hope of redemption, its universal dynamic of righteousness, holiness, and heaven.

Jesus claimed to reveal the final religion to men. The generations have discovered the claim well founded. Christianity possesses certain eternal qualities which make it independent of the evolutionary advances of the race, except in matching it and beckoning it on, and certain universal elements which witness that it is destined to provide the satisfaction and salvation of all mankind. In the search for the essence of Christianity some great and scholarly men have dwelt too much upon the historical Jesus, to the exclusion of Him as the Redeemer. “The effects of this are already appearing in the impoverished religious values of the sermons produced by the younger generation of preachers, and the deplorable decline of spiritual life and knowledge in many Churches. Results open to observation show that the movement to simplify the Christian essence by discarding the

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theology of St. Paul easily carries the teaching of the Christian pulpit to a position where, for those who submit to that teaching, the characteristic experiences of the Christian life become practically impossible. The Christian sense of sin, Christian penitence at the foot of the cross, Christian faith in an atoning Savior, Christian peace with God through the mediation of Jesus Christ,—these and other experiences, which were the very life of apostles and of apostolic souls, fade from the view of the ministry, have no meaning for the younger generations.”

We can understand some of the causes for present-day reaction against the mediæval traditions concerning the incarnation which led to a discrediting of the reality itself. For example, Origen taught that the Incarnation was but an act of fraud and deceit on the part of God by which He surprised and circumvented the devil. “It is by means of a certain amount of deceit,” says he, “that God carried out this scheme on our behalf. For that, not by pure Deity alone, but by Deity veiled in human nature, God, without the knowledge of His enemy, got within the lines of him who had man in his power, is in some manner a fraud and a surprise.” One scarcely needs to be reminded how utterly erroneous were such ideas,

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both of God and of man, and how natural the revolt against them. It was the style and fashion of scholasticism to describe the death of Christ as “an unjust over-charge,” and that the devil was surprised into exacting a penalty from One who had not deserved to incur it. Ambrose referred to the incident as “pious fraud;” Augustine called the Cross a “mousetrap;” Isidore of Seville “adopted the image of a bird caught in a net” to characterize it. Rufinus and Gregory the Great called Christ’s human nature a “bait,” and spoke of the devil as “captured on the hook of the Incarnation, and as grasping after the bait of the body and transfixed by the hook of the Divinity.” Such conceptions of the Incarnation and the Cross are beset with the gravest difficulties, both intellectual and moral. Repudiating these explanations, however, does not invalidate the great central facts of the Christian religion.

The revelation of God through the humanity and divinity of Christ; the presence of God in His world and in the hearts of men through the immanent Spirit; the power and dynamic of the Cross; the need, the opportunity, and experience of human redemption; the Christian motives of service; the reality and significance of the resurrection of Christ, together with the awakening of

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the immortal hope of humanity, and all that implies of Christian experience, knowledge, and life, are undying fundamentals of the Christian religion. Humanity witnesses to their eternal significance and universal value. The glory and majesty of these truths are more and more apparent. The fullness of the Godhead is in them; the depths of the riches of divine grace are in them; the unspeakable gift of God is in them; the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in them; the depth and height and breadth and length of the love of God are in them. The growing appreciation of the Biblical content, the broadening scope of Christian experience are disclosing the vast proportions of these permanent elements that constitute the essence of the Christian religion. It is becoming more apparent to the earnest religious thinking of our time that "these characteristic data of our religion are the common possession of all who hold the Christian faith and the common opportunity of all people under heaven."

By this sign Christianity is destined to conquer. Everywhere Christianity is accompanied by characteristic signs. Everywhere it invests life with new meaning. Everywhere it develops in men one type of religious experience, one ethical outlook, one vision of holiness, and one habit of communion

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with the living Lord. It is the final religion and is destined to conquer the world as the revelation of God unto men. Christ's

“Life, like a dome of many colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.”

IV. A FORECAST OF THE FUTURE. We are venturing, finally, upon less certain ground in assuming the rôle of a forecaster. One never can foreknow what surprises and revolutions will occur in the future. Even the dreams of men, if they come true, are often far different from the reality itself, in its breadth and compass. But, judging by the tendencies and signs of our times, which point at least the direction the evolution of Christianity will take, the future is bound to behold never a cessation of the hope and necessity of individual redemption, but also a development of the social ideals of Christianity in accordance with the ethics of Jesus. A social conscience will be evolved subordinating every interest to the common good and the ideals of the Kingdom of God. His sympathy with suffering, His sense of the solidarity with the common people, His affinity with democracy, His attitude with respect to wealth and poverty, His faith in love as the basis of the social order, will profoundly affect the ethics of the future, as men endeavor to apply those principles of the Christian

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religion as revealed in the Golden Rule, the second great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and the eleventh commandment, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye should love one another even as also I have loved you."

We make bold to prophesy that the divisiveness of Protestantism, after its successful struggle for religious liberty, for a spiritual authority, for a vital religious faith in salvation, shall have been won, will be transformed into a united Protestantism, which shall begin to realize that dream of a magnificent spiritual world-empire it was the mission of Christ to found. There will be less emphasis upon the non-essentials and less important articles of faith, with unwavering adherence to the fundamentals and unswerving loyalty to Jesus Christ. Christianity, both at home and on the mission fields, calls for this uniting of forces. In this connection the noble proposals of the Lambeth Conference, to establish a fourfold basis of organic union, may yet be prophetic of coming history, viz., "The Holy Scriptures, the two Sacraments, the Catholic Creeds, the Historic Episcopate."

How dare any man affirm beyond a peradventure that Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Greek Catholics, a mighty triumvirate, purged and puri-

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fied as time rolls on, will never unite their antagonistic and opposing forces under the banner of the Christ? If they ever do, they will move forward, one solid phalanx, conquering and to conquer, until the kingdoms of the world shall become, in truth, the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Then may a victorious Christianity everywhere send up this mighty shout of triumph:

“Like a mighty army
 Moves the Church of God,
Brothers, we are treading
 Where the saints have trod.
We are not divided,
 All one body we;
One in hope and doctrine
 One in charity.”

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